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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, September 20, 2024

Purrfection

The interesting tale of how Max the beloved Castleton cat went viral

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

If your answer is always no to the question: Have you ever met someone famous? Quickly change that answer to a yes if you’ve ever stepped foot on Castleton’s campus at Vermont State University.

Max, our beloved campus cat of Vermont State University Castleton, has become a worldwide sensation after being awarded an honorary doctorate in “Litter-ature” last spring. When the class of 2024 graduated, Max received the prestigious title, solidifying his place as not just a campus legend – but a global one.

News outlets worldwide wanted a piece of Max’s story, including USA Today, CNN, Vermont Public, The Washington Post and even the Hindustan Times in India.

For years, Max has been a fixture at Castleton, especially near Leavenworth Hall, where students often find him lounging or strolling the grounds as if he’s the true head of the campus. His cool, unbothered demeanor and welcoming presence have made him a cherished companion for students and faculty for years.

Jess Duncan, the director of Career Development and Innovation across all Vermont State University campuses, was one of the creative directors behind this brilliant idea.

“It’s a cool career development story. Julie Lepo was our career development Title Three intern, and she hosted an event for LinkedIn photo headshots, so students could come and get their professional photo from LinkedIn, or wear their cap and gown on the steps of Woodruff,” Duncan said.

“While they were taking photos, we had a few props.



Doctor Max Dow poses for the television camera at his favorite spot on the VTSU Castleton campus.

One of them was like a Spartan bear with a cap and gown and this cute, little graduation cap. Then Julie and I happened to see Max on the Leavenworth steps,” Duncan said. “So, we went down, we were petting Max, and we had the gradu-

ation cap. I was like, oh my gosh, we have to do this. So, we held the cap on him and took a bunch of pictures. We had a bunch of fun taking pictures of him. He is a piece of Castleton and everyone loves him.”

Robert Franklin is the second creative mind behind this viral post. Duncan sent the photo of Max with his cap on into their team chat with the caption, “Did Max fill out his cat application for his degree?” Franklin saw the photo and

realized there was truly something there

Franklin is the Social Media Manager for Vermont State University and used that to his advantage by posting the photo to the Vermont State University Instagram and Facebook page.

“I was shocked. I didn’t think it would go that big. I thought maybe media around Vermont would pick it up and they’d think it was cute, but I never thought it would go that big,” he said.

Little did VTSU know, that one photo would be the start of something worldwide.

Max’s journey to stardom has captivated audiences beyond our small Vermont campus, sparking widespread media coverage and making him an international feline sensation. CNN even picked up the story and commented on how famous Max is getting across the globe.

“The furry graduate even has his own school email and directory page. Ashley Dow and her daughter, Kaitlyn Tanner, a student at Vermont State, monitor Max’s email and have responded to messages from as far as Germany and England,” he said.

Ashley Dow is Max’s mother/manager and has been star-struck during this whole adventure.

“This is all crazy. I did an interview on TV in Sydney, Australia, Today Show, oh my goodness, that was the most interesting one,” Dow said.

Dow has been contacted by the biggest names in the media. Their story has even been used to fight Emotional Support Animal laws on a campus.

“There was a group that contacted us from Ohio. She was trying to get emotional support animals approved on campus out there. She wanted to have information about what the college did and how Max has helped the students so that she could try to lobby for that out there,” Dow said.

See “Dr. Max” on page 6

New semester and surged enrollment

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

Aug. 29 marked the celebration of a new academic year at Vermont State University and with it an impressive surge in enrollment.

Castleton’s annual convocation featured addresses from Cathy Kozlik, dean of the School of Business and Professional Studies, faculty representative Andre Fleche, Student Government Association President Thomas Kehoe and university President David Bergh.

“We’re on the cusp of a new academic year, just the second in our new life as Vermont State University,” said Kozlik. “We have the opportunity to work together, to shape something together. Our students are already leading the way in this endeavor.”

Kozlik advised new and returning students to “take full advantage” of all academic and extracurricular opportunities at Castleton.

“Don’t sit in your room students,” she added. “I hope you will join this vibrant community and become part of a story which is bigger than yourself.”

The ceremony recognized 34 new faculty and staff hired at Castleton this calendar year, roughly 550 new first year students, and international students from Canada, Italy,

Spain, Norway, and Estonia, Russia.

Fleche spoke on behalf of the faculty, saying, “[We] are especially looking forward to working with all new and returning students. At Castleton, as always, you can expect a close personal relationship with your professors and peers, face-to-face and hands-on work, and exciting opportunities outside of the classroom.”

He went on to list many impressive faculty accom-

plishments, including awards, attendance at prestigious conferences, publications and research findings, in addition to their on-campus initiatives. He urges students to inquire more about professors and take advantage of the opportunities

they have to offer. Kehoe expressed his confidence in the merged, yet historically thriving Castleton campus.

“Let me assure you, the spirit of Castleton, the spirit of the Spartan, still stands strong,” he said to a round of applause.

He pledged his and the SGA’s loyalty to serving and representing the student body, especially through merger-related changes and challenges.

“I, along with the rest of our student leadership, and the leadership here on campus, hold your best interest at heart. We are here to support you, listen to you, and fight for you. Your voice matters now more than ever,” he said.

Due to VTSU’s simultaneous convocations, Bergh delivered his message via video.

“It’s going to be a great year. I can feel it in my bones,” he said.

This feeling is illustrated by a 14% increase in enrollment since Fall 2023, announced in a university-wide email by Bergh and reinforced by a press release from Communications Director Greta Hasler on Sept. 5.

See “Convocation” on page 6.



PEARL BELLOMO

The Fall ‘24 semester began on a high note with Convocation and the announcement of a 14% increase in enrollment. Thomas Kehoe (top left), Cathy Kozlik, and the University Chorus pictured at Convocation.

You don't need the products social media shoves at you

I should be consuming social media; my social media should not be consuming me.

Lately, as I do my nightly scroll through social media, I've noticed this extreme increase in advertisements and sponsored videos (sponsored videos are when a content creator gets paid to promote a product in their video).

My feed used to be filled with inspiring and educational videos. I learned and grew through social media's representation of art and culture from across the world.

Now, I can't open a social media app without being pressured to buy a "viral" "must have" product.

I believe it all stems from our society's obsession with aesthetics and curated identities, which is derived from the bigger umbrella of capitalism.

When I was a teenager, I would see these really cool hippie chicks on TikTok who seemed really satisfied in life.

I thought to myself, if I just had those clothes, that hair, those shoes, and that water bottle, then I could live a life like that.

I wanted so badly to fit into that free spirit aesthetic that I didn't care very much about actually being a free spirit.

I soon realized having materialistic items wouldn't guarantee happiness and satisfaction in life. I had to find it for myself.

My sense of self has been gained through understanding my dreams and passions.

I try to actively exclude any influence from social media.

That's not to say I don't slip up every now and again, but I try to be aware of it.

Now it's even easier because social media apps have quick links to buy whatever your favorite content creator is wearing or doing in specific videos.

So, whenever I feel tempted to buy something, I try and ask myself, is this something that will bring me joy, or be useful in my life? Or do I just want it because everyone has it and I feel left out.

We all want to fit into these aesthetics that we forget to spend time figuring out who we actually are.

It's important to remember that the lives that are portrayed on social media aren't realistic, and material objects won't change who you are or your self-worth.

And I can guarantee the "must have" Owala water bottle especially won't.

We're burying our real personalities and interests under these new weekly trends.

How much are these identities and aesthetics costing us?

Because I'm not willing to pay.

- Jess Emery



JOE VYVIAL

What's next for the closed Cottage?

It may sound high maintenance, but who really has time to walk all the way to Huden or Fireside every time they need something to eat or drink?

Of course, Sodexo workers wanted Coffee Cottage to stay open just as much as the next person - and toiled to do so. A compiling net loss and short staffing closed the doors of the Cottage multiple times last semester, followed by a last attempt to save the establishment.

Yet, the changes in decor and to the menu didn't reel in enough students to save it, hence the announcement of its permanent closure in early August.

It's shocking how such a

popular spot on campus could struggle financially. On an average day, with professors grabbing coffee or students lounging around inside or out on the picnic tables (with regular visits from Max the cat), it looked quite successful.

But they had been struggling throughout recent years, hence their closure for weeks straight in 2022 and for the entire Fall '23 semester.

Now, it's one less dining option, one less available space in the community, and one heck of a lot more work for Huden and Fireside workers (who already work hard enough). For Fireside, recovering from the recent loss of long-time leader Jim Stewart among other staff

was already enough to handle.

Factoring in the recent decrease of library hours due to a cut to the Evening Supervisor position, students need more spaces to just be. Yes, students frequented the Cottage for its great menu, but many also say they just enjoyed the atmosphere.

It was the perfect place to do homework, chat with friends, or enjoy a moment away from class. It was cozy and inviting, much different than the other work-focused spots on campus.

Students were, however, considered in the aftermath.

Popular Coffee Cottage items and meal deals were added to Fireside, and the space is being evaluated for how it can

be used to serve students. One idea has been for student programming with food provided by Sodexo, indicated by Dean of Students Jamia Danzy, but options remain open.

Whatever it ends up being used for, it's vital to gain student input and help make up for what was lost.

In the meantime, the first floor of the Moriarty House remains vacant, quiet except for the gasps of shock from those who didn't know their favorite coffee and sandwich place closed.

- Pearl Bellomo

She was beautiful and I may have led to her death

I'm a safe driver. But when I was running behind unsure if I was going to make it on time, of course I went faster than needed.

I got there on time, exactly. Getting there safely secured in my mind that I am invincible and driving fast isn't that big of a risk. Right?

When I left, I remembered how thrilling it was to drive fast, under the pressure of a ticking hand. So, on my way home, I drove fast.

This time was the same as any other, in almost every way. Same road, same music, same time - just a little faster.

I'm a safe driver.

But not this time.

I was blasting music to sing along to and speeding, way more than I am comfortable with on windy Vermont roads. The straight part of this road is coming up, I tell myself. I'm preparing to try to hit a speed I've never gone before, ready to push on the gas pedal.

I tell myself this is safe, other people do it, a calculated risk. As the road curves to the right before the straightaway I see something brown in my right eye, something beautiful.

A deer is in a bush on the side of the road. A stunning deer, with butterscotch fur and white speckles across its body.

I press on my brakes. It's not in the road, so I will just drive past.

But I scared it rounding the curve as fast as I did and it jumped into the middle of my lane.

I didn't swerve.

I felt a small impact and heard a thunk, then the deer was flying over my windshield.

I didn't see where it landed.

I kept driving.

I turned off my music because I didn't feel like singing anymore. I looked for a place to pull off and I parked in the middle of a dirt driveway, and I just sat there for a minute trying

to process what just happened.

I get out. I look at my mom's perfect silver Nissan Altima. The headlight on the driver's side is shattered. The car still runs perfectly and the lights work. I hope it won't cost too much to fix it.

I pull pieces of broken plastic from the headlight. I wonder if any pieces are in the deer. I don't know what to do. I've never been in a car accident before. I called my mom, she didn't answer. I text her a picture of her silver Nissan, which has remnants from the deer still on it.

I get back in the car. I take

a deep breath. I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm okay I tell myself.

I don't know how the deer is. I hit it at about 40 mph and it may have died on the side of the road. I'm too scared to go back and look.

I'm a safe driver. I tell everyone this and I believe that it is true. I love driving. Not so much anymore. I look out for anything brown when the bushes get too close to the road, and I get nervous when foliage blocks my vision.

The deer was a light brown color with white dots. I learned this meant it was a girl. She was beautiful, and I hit her. She was beautiful and I didn't

slow down enough. She was beautiful and just scared. She was beautiful. And I may have led her to her death.

Not knowing has kept me up many nights, hyperventilating, crying, telling myself I am stupid for speeding.

I wasn't even in a rush to get anywhere. I know it's not my fault she jumped into the road, she is just an animal who didn't know any better. A deer in headlights.

Now I'm a safe driver, because no matter the temptation to drive fast I know that it's not worth taking a life.

- Robin Chamberlain

The road back

My day started on a Wednesday around 6 a.m. when my insufferable alarm clock would not stop yelling at me to wake up. It was move-in day, so getting out of bed wasn't too difficult considering my excitement to get the day going.

I got up, stuffed a few last-minute items into my backpack, and headed downstairs to the kitchen to find my mom brewing her daily latte.

"Believe I have everything," I yelled from the front door as she prepared her breakfast. A banana and peanut butter on toast will usually do for her first meal of the day.

After many long hugs from family, I shoved some full backpacks and pillows into my car, and by around 7 a.m. I was on my way to Vermont. It is always a weird feeling leaving home for school, and you would think it being my third time I would be a bit more used to it, but I wasn't.

I'm not.

It's not a long drive, only about five hours from home, but six if I decide to take a long stroll through the Target in Plattsburgh to pick up things I "can't get in Canada." I was nervous about driving by myself. I had never gone more than two hours alone in my car. The night before I made sure

to make a playlist to keep my journey interesting, consisting of Tyler Childers, Chris Stapleton and Zack Bryan.

I'd say I was taken care of so, I started to drive. The first hour, the weather wasn't great. It was cloudy with very minimal sunshine. Every once in a while, a handful of raindrops would splatter onto my windshield but had a short stay thanks to my squeaky wipers.

Once I got to the border, it was smooth sailing. It was early in the morning, so the border security officer who let me through was very chippy, handing my papers back with a smile which is usually a rare occurrence. I was very excited for the remainder of the trip ahead.

There are two different ways to school, although both are backroads passing through small towns with big antique shops along the side of the roads. Driving through winding forests then nothing but flat fields 10 minutes later keeps you more focused on the road.

You can do a lot of thinking by yourself on longer road trips like this one. Your mind starts to wonder, as did mine. I swear I'm not crazy, but I did have a few pretty good conversations with myself. So good I was convinced I could start my

own podcast, new ideas for episodes popping in my head as I was driving past farmland and abandoned homes.

At one point I passed the Amish in a horse and buggy. I smiled as I drove past them, veering into the middle of the two-lane backroad, making sure to give enough space between my small car and the large carriage. I continued driving, pondering. I continue thinking about having a podcast, then explaining to someone that I was talking to myself about having a podcast. I swear I'm not crazy. A little while later, I finally hit the main highway. This was a much more scenic route although it did not last as long as I'd liked it to. I was surrounded by towering mountains of trees, mostly pine, I believe.

They surrounded me, not in a way that I could reach out and touch them, but they seemed much further than they were. It was pure green for what seemed like forever with a few small lakes here and there. About 45 minutes later I was saying goodbye to the smooth roads and back on the pothole-filled ones.

More farms, more small towns, and a lot more of nothing.

That's the beauty of taking

the back roads to a small town. There's not a whole lot going on, which is peaceful. But coming from Canada's capital, it's a bit boring. I could tell I was getting close to my destination as I passed a familiar taco truck and gas station. The taco truck is recognizable since there is nothing around it. Literally it's in the middle of a field. I was relieved to see that truck, a landmark to show my proximity to my home for the next 10 months.

I entered the highway once again, but this time I was getting closer to school. Now that I knew exactly where I was, I could shut my gps of, feeling like a local.

About five minutes later I was getting off exit 5 and creeping my way through town and into my new home for the next while. At last, my journey came to an end, and a new one began.

- Kara Boassaly

Check us out online at castletonspartan.com



SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

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AI: Where is the line?

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

In a world where AI can write your essay and answer all your quiz questions, students are left wondering: Where's the line between using AI as a tool and letting it do the thinking for us?

That line sounded good, right? Well, it should! It's hot and fresh from the Chat GPT press. With one simple prompt, a list of 10 foolproof, human-like sentences perfectly curated for this article were created.

Now, more than ever, AI (artificial intelligence) is becoming more accessible and widespread, especially in the classroom. But as the use of AI becomes more normalized, the question is, when does it go too far?

"Obviously, there is a line to AI. Do I know what that line is? I don't," said VTSU Castleton communications professor Sam David-Boyd.

In Davis-Boyd's classes, she discusses and acknowledges her thoughts on AI, but her advice to students is simple: "I'm not saying don't use AI. I am saying don't cheat."

This statement remains almost the same among educators and students alike.

Professor Michael Talbott, chair of Castleton's communications department, compares AI to tools used in construction.

"A tool can't build a house for you, but you can use it to build a house," he said.

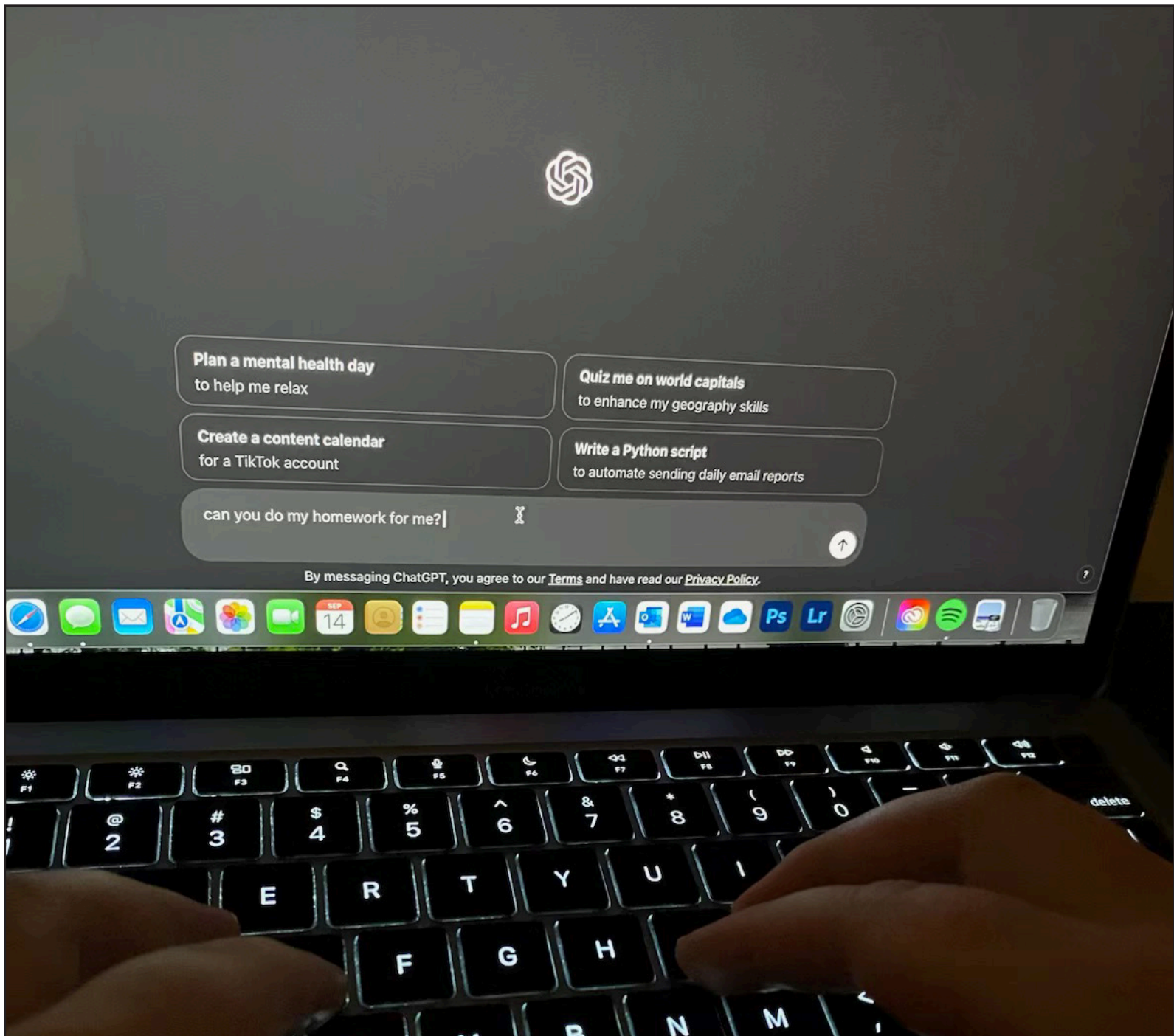
Talbott sees AI as a valuable resource, especially for students who struggle to get started on assignments.

"AI can help you turn corners when you get stuck," he says. "It can help you figure out where you might go next when you run out of ideas."

Yet, for students like Tim Keeler, the use of AI feels like a shortcut.

"I just think it's really lame, honestly," Keeler says. "I think you should be able to come up with your own ideas rather than having a tool give you ideas. I'm smart, and I can come up with my own ideas. I don't need a tool to do it for me."

There's also the risk of students relying too heavily on AI, which has backfired. Keeler recalls a story about one of his friends at West Point, a military school in New York. This student got into serious trouble for using AI-generated suggestions from Grammarly



AVERY BOUCHARD

Faculty and students struggle with the excessive use of AI in the Classroom.

Premium on one of his assignments. After submission, his paper was flagged for excessive AI use, and the student nearly faced expulsion, and ultimately had to redo an entire year of college as a result.

Students like Daniel Lee Wright III and Zoe Ukasik have echoed their concerns on the reliability of AI and how much it actually knows. Lee Wright says he, "asked Chat GPT how many 'R's' there are in 'strawberry,' and it said two."

Ukasik has a similar story. She asked ChatGPT to create a list of five-letter words ending in eo. Upon this request, ChatGPT responded with "ideo" and "video" saying

these were the only five-letter words ending in eo.

"What about rodeo?" Ukasik pointed out.

Though these errors seem small, and could be harmless in casual settings, they show the true unreliability of AI.

Some students advocate for explicit policies. Keeler says that he believes "teachers should definitely acknowledge AI, especially in the syllabus." Though he has never used any sort of AI, he acknowledges many people have and will.

"People are going to use it. So, teachers should at least come up with some sort of policy on AI, whether they allow it in some regards or don't allow it at all."

Three other students interviewed agree with Keeler's statement and that the key to AI is how it's used.

For some students, AI provides a much-needed boost of inspiration or clarity.

"I'll ask it (Chat GPT) for examples or help with formatting," Lee Wright said. "Outside of school, I use it for things like finding good song prompts or chord progressions."

He sees it as an escape from writer's block, offering a gentle push to keep his creativity flowing.

Even though AI can help students get started or assist with brainstorming, educators stress that it must be used thoughtfully. Talbott points out

that AI is not a replacement for critical thinking.

"AI can be a great point of entry," he said. "But students who ask AI to do their assignments for them are going to get caught. It's plagiarism, and it's not a good use of the technology."

As AI continues to evolve, the conversation about its role in academia will only grow more complex. Heather Wood, a Castleton student, believes that AI could lead to a decline in intellectual rigor.

"I think AI is going to create less intelligent people," she said. "Because people are going to rely on the internet, and when the internet is gone, what will we do then?"

As students and educators grapple with the overall ethics of AI, one thing is clear: the line between AI being a helpful tool or an intellectual crutch is still being drawn. Navigating this gray space responsibly may become one of the defining challenges for both students and educational institutions in the future, but let's heed on the side of caution.

Wood put it simply. "It's a gift, but it's horrifying. People start relying on it to get things done, which can correlate to a less intellectual nation," she said.

Returning home is tougher then expected



JESS EMERY

VTSU Castleton student Jess Emery and her friends having a beer outside a pub in London.

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Being back in Vermont after spending six months in London has proven to be the worst comedown of my life.

And that is really saying something.

Now, I'm not saying I hate my home. I love being close to my family and friends, but this tale is as old as time.

I've outgrown the place I grew in.

At least for now.

In London, I thrived on the creativity of others. There was so much happening all the time, and my friends and I spent every second writing, filming, painting and creating.

I never knew life could be that colorful.

I never knew I could exist so loudly.

I've realized since coming home, that things are just silent, still.

I have such an intense love and connection for those people and that place. The speed

and severity with which we all grew together was something quite fierce.

Spending every waking hour with the loves of my life was a dream, and now I can't tell you the next time I'll see any of them.

Over the past few months, I have felt my life in London slipping through my fingers and not a single blog post I had read before the journey prepared me for this kind of mourning.

I also think it has to do with mourning "The Dream."

Ever since I was a kid, I've wanted to travel. I didn't really have any other goals or know what I wanted from life except to go to grand places and see grand things.

Now, in no way have I run out of places to go to.

But the idea of traveling the world was always a far-fetched, unachievable dream.

I've now done the one thing I never thought I'd be able to do.

So, what now?
Sure, I have other dreams,

and I keep reminding myself that this probably wasn't the height of my life.

Unfortunately, I've never been particularly persuasive.

Something to know about studying abroad is it's all about the experience.

Something new and crazy was always happening.

I said yes to just about everything. I was reckless, and I was free in the most fantastic city.

Mind you, it was not a great formula for frugality.

Flash forward two months later and I'm the most broke I've ever been and will probably continue to be for at least 10 years.

About a month ago, I was laying on my mattress on the floor of my new apartment on Elm Street in Castleton, Vermont.

I was reading Joan Didion, hoping to learn something.

My mattress didn't have a bed frame, and my box fan blew about stale air.

No art had been hung on the walls yet.

My dresser was from my grandma's house, my rugs didn't match, and the window was missing the screen.

I was thinking: I'm 21; this feels pivotal.

So, I realized that day, late in July, one doesn't just stop having experiences.

Maybe it wasn't the fact that things happened in London that caused recklessness.

Maybe it was because I made them happen.

Although even I don't quite believe that.

I won't sit here and spout nonsense about how my friends made me brave and I'll take the courage they gave me onto the next Great Adventure.

Because yes, I was brave when I was around them, but I don't know where I'm going next.

Wherever it is, I don't really feel courageous enough to face it without them.

Student activists discuss library controversy

Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

When Vermont State University administration announced their plan for an all-digital library in Spring '23, many students and faculty took major issue with this decision. It sparked major controversy and prompted activists on campus to act.

A group of student filmmakers got together to shed light on the situation, creating an informational documentary that has been screened throughout the University, and at future film festivals. On Wednesday, Sept.

4, three of the filmmakers – Vermont State alumnus Will Smith and Jacob Gonzalez, and current senior Maddie Lindgren, joined an Activism and Media class held in Leavenworth Hall to discuss their film and the process of making it.

Everyone was pumped to learn more about what went on behind the scenes as students began asking questions.

Some excellent questions were asked from students from the very start. For instance, when asked about the process and prepping for the film, Gonzalez gave a somewhat surprising answer.

"Honestly, I think, there wasn't really a lot of planning just because it was happening in real time, so it was almost kind of like...so let's film this part...we kind of just let the story unfold into the point where...we had a complete story and we were able to put it together," Gonzalez said.

He went on to describe how "picking out key points" was a big part of how the pieces came together.

Will Smith, who did a lot of behind-the-scenes work, also gave some input as to how everything unfolded.

"I want to add that, a lot of it,

we had...a week run time from event to event with everything that was happening. So, we didn't sit down and plan...ok, this week, we're gonna do this, and in a monthgonna go film the board of trustees," Smith said. "It was literally...This is happening. We need to go film it." Smith continued.

When asked about how they chose which parts of their film to leave in and take out, Smith gave a very thoughtful and metaphorical answer that really spoke to the creativity of the film crew.

See "Library" on page 6



AMANDA JOHNSON

Maddie on the Street

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



Question:

Why are you most excited to be back to school?



Haley Lassen
Senior

“To be back with friends and back in the Spartan community. There is nothing like coming back to this small community we have here.”



Ella Hall
Freshman

“I’m really just excited to be able to learn and grow more.”



Jacob Calabro
Junior

“I’m excited to be back playing football and hanging out with my friends and my girlfriend. Shout-out Mia Forsberg.”



Olivia Carter
Freshman

“I’m excited to meet new people and find new opportunities.”



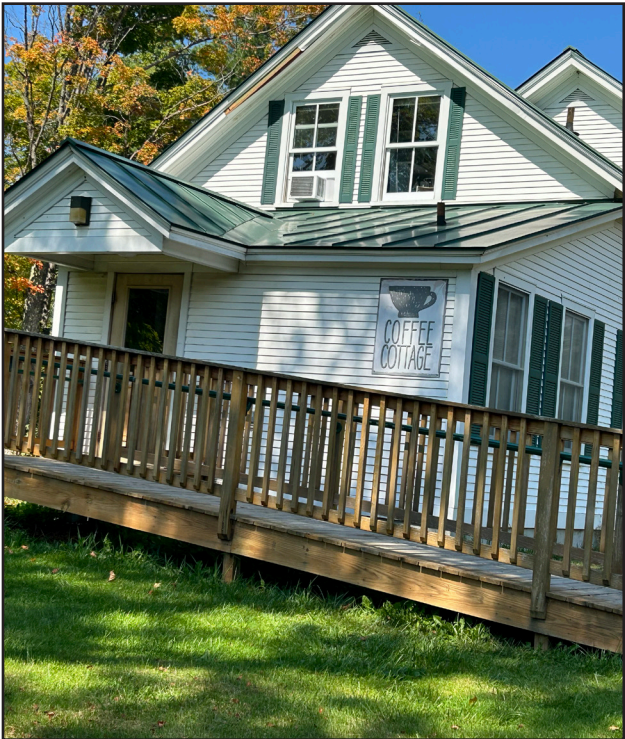
Jack Boyle
Senior

“Being back on campus is great. I love seeing my friends and be able to start our fall ball season.”



GABBY BLANCHARD

An empty Coffee Cottage is shown after its recent closing (above). A student stops in to grab a quick bite while the Coffee Cottage was still up and running.



The Coffee Cottage is no more

Castleton Spartan
Gabby Blanchard

Maybe it was your favorite place to study? Your daily pick-me-up for a caffeine break? A meeting spot to catch up with friends? Or the place that had your favorite sandwich?

The cozy feel of the small cafe, located on the academic side of campus next to the Leavenworth building, gave a welcoming feeling to every student that walked in.

But on April 30 it was announced in an email that the Coffee Cottage would be closed for the rest of the spring semester and in a subsequent email it was announced it wouldn’t re-open.

The closure left some students, staff and faculty disappointed.

“I think it is so important to have a place on this side of

campus for students to get a quick bite and a caffeine boost in between classes when not having enough time to go to Fireside,” said Britt Green, director of the McNair Scholars Program, who has an office above the Cottage.

So, why did the perfect little coffee shop close?

“There were not enough customers to keep it running, and when it was open there wasn’t a big announcement so not a lot of people were aware,” said student Emily Macias, sharing what she had heard around campus.

Jamia Danzy, VTSU dean of students, said that’s exactly the case.

“Coffee Cottage had been losing money (over \$20,000). While a discussion of closing for Spring 2024 came up, we wanted to try to make it work first,” Danzy said in an email

interview.

She explains how Coffee Cottage updated its décor, added new menu items, and even offered more healthy options. The changes were made to try to get it to make money.

However, during the Spring 2024 semester, Coffee Cottage lost another \$8,000, she said.

Danzy then shared how her supervisor, Kelly Beckwith, and Assistant Vice president for Campus Operations Mike Stevens both agreed that given the unsuccessful efforts to turn the Coffee Cottage around, it was wise to close it for now.

Has Fireside been affected as a result of the Coffee Cottage closing?

Danzy explains how after looking at the data from the Coffee Cottage over the spring, it revealed that 65% of transactions were for smoothies. As

a result, smoothies and meal specials are now offered in the Fireside Café.

But Fireside is now operating without its likeable former leader, Jim Stewart, who left his position after the spring semester.

His loss is being felt by students and staff.

When Green was informed about Stewart leaving, it looked like she could have almost fallen out of her chair in shock.

“He is such a nice guy, I can’t believe he left. He has been here for YEARS!” she said.

Green also spoke about how weird it seems to have no Coffee Cottage under her office

“I will be sitting up here in my office and I can hear people walk in assuming it’s open only to then hear a big follow up sigh and an ‘Ah man, it’s

closed!’” Green said. “It is a beautiful space and building, so I hope they can find something for it.” Green added.

Danzy said discussion are in the works to best use the now vacant space.

“We hope that it is used for student programming and So-dexo has offered to work with interested parties to arrange to have food there,” she said. “I hope to engage the community in making the best use of Coffee Cottage. Staff and faculty responded to the email I sent and there were volunteers who wanted to be a part of the decision making. I also hope to include SGA as a representative for the student interest in the future of the space. I am hopeful that the Castleton community will fill the space based on community interest and needs.”

Come see what the Wellness Center offers

Castleton Spartan
Rosa Kehoe

In the campus center on the second floor lies the Wellness Center, the place to go when you have any form of health issues. Whether it’s physical or mental, they’re guaranteed to help you out.

Jacqueline Eddy is the Associate Director of Health and Wellness on the Castleton campus in the Wellness Center and hopes to bring awareness of what the center has to offer.

“Our Wellness Center has great resources. We offer both counseling and nursing services,” Jackie says.

She notes that all services are free and confidential to all Castleton students, and the counselors at the center take a holistic approach to all areas of health. They not only offer mental health services but free nursing services too! Eddy emphasizes the abundance of free resources they are able to offer students such as pregnancy tests, condoms, over the counter medicine, first aid items, fentanyl testing strips and so much more.

Eddy says that the wellness center is always advertising by “sending out emails to all students, signage across campus, bulletin boards in the campus center, tabling throughout the campus, and giving presentations at student orientations and CNX classes.” So keep your eye out for these advertisements as well as on campus events as well.

In fact, this past week The Wellness Center had a table on



ROSA KEHOE

Wellness Center worker Olivia Cormier offers information about suicide prevention at the Career Fair.

the bottom floor of the Campus Center to help support and bring awareness to suicide prevention. At this event, there were free stickers and posters as well as bead necklaces for students to wear proudly that were color-coded to represent loss of a family member, self-harm, etc. Events like these are great for student engagement, promotion of The Wellness Center, and a broader message like suicide prevention.

Eddy makes it clear that she believes students especially can benefit from additional support in their lives, especially because they are experi-

encing so many new transitions and changes. She encourages students to take advantage of all that The Wellness Center has to offer.

“There is always one more option,” Eddy says. “And sometimes, we can forget that when we are stressed and overwhelmed. That’s where we can come in. We can help explore options!”

Jeanean Dunlap, the current Senior Staff Assistant at the Wellness Center for the past five years, says that she loves “that everything is free for the students”. Including mental health counseling and nurse

visits.”

Like Eddy, Dunlap also notes the surplus of free items they are able to give students. “And if you are in need of something else just let us know,” Dunlap says.

Dunlap goes on to say that she wants students to know that “everything is confidential and they can stop in anytime from 9-4 M-F.” They can simply show up during these hours without an appointment and will be seen by a counselor.

Many students both on and off campus speak incredibly highly about the Wellness Center and all it has to offer,

Mackenzie Sturgill being one of them.

“I totally recommend it! I sing that place’s praises.” She says that she would “recommend it to anyone who just needs a listening ear, a space to relax, someone to trust, a place where you can get items if you need them”

Angelina Gotshall is another student who uses the Wellness Center. “I don’t use the Wellness Center that often, but when I do it’s usually either for a counseling session when things get really stressful, whether that’s academically or socially, or if I’m not feeling great and need to go see someone really quick for something simple,” she says.

Gotshall goes on to say that she “thinks the Wellness Center is a great resource and they can help with a bunch of stuff. I would recommend students to go there, especially for the counseling aspect of it.”

The Wellness Center is of course welcome to all, and they would love to see new students come in and take advantage of all the resources and items that they offer.

Eddy puts it best saying, “We WANT to work with them(students). We have no judgment for why they are seeking out services. We are here to be supportive and objective and will not stereotype, stigmatize, or ridicule a person concerning their worries or issues. They are never an inconvenience; and no issue is too “small.”

Reconnecting with creativity, one spray paint can at a time



Colby Tucker creates a neon-looking strawberry with spray paint.

By Colby Tucker
Spartan Contributor

In high school, art was a huge part of my life. I used to spend hours sketching, painting, and experimenting with different techniques and creating pieces like the one I recently completed.

Back then, the act of making art was as natural as breathing.

It wasn't about producing anything perfect or even something that anyone else would necessarily like. It was about the joy of the process—the thrill of seeing an idea come to life on paper or canvas, the satisfaction of expressing myself visually.

It was a way to get lost in my thoughts, to explore emotions and ideas that I couldn't always put into words.

But as time passed, life got busier.

Between school, work and everyday responsibilities, art slowly faded into the back-

ground. I fell out of touch with that creative side of myself, and before I knew it, months turned into years without pick-

“Back then, the act of making art was as natural as breathing. It wasn't about producing anything perfect....it was about the joy of the process.”

-Colby Tucker

ing up a brush or even doodling for fun.

The part of me that had been so in tune with artistic expression in high school seemed to slip away. It wasn't intentional, but the demands of growing up left less and less room for creativity. I guess I got caught up in the idea that art wasn't something I had time for anymore.

Recently, though, I've been feeling the pull to reconnect with that lost part of myself. I've realized how much I miss making art simply for the joy of it.

So, I've been pushing myself to get back into creating again—not because I feel like I have to or because I want to show my work to anyone, but because it's genuinely fun.

There's something incredibly freeing about creating without any external pressure. I'm not worried about whether the piece will turn out “right” or if it meets some standard. I'm just allowing myself to en-

joy the process, the colors, the shapes, and the act of bringing something new into existence.

Each time I sit down to work on a piece, it feels like I'm tapping into something deep within me that's been dormant for too long. It brings me back to those days in high school when I would lose track of time while working on a drawing or painting, completely absorbed in the moment.

Every brushstroke or line feels like a small step toward reconnecting with that younger version of myself—the one who wasn't afraid to experiment, to make mistakes, and to play with ideas just for the fun of it.

There's more to this collection of earrings

By Clarabel Redondo
Spartan Contributor

I'm 8 years old, and it's been a year since I first got my ears pierced. I've been wearing the same pair of star studs nearly every day.

I'm surrounded by family members, each smiling at me – either out of anticipation or through boredom. We're sitting in the living room of my aunt's small lake house. It's not large enough to accommodate us all. I'm at the dinner table, the chair turned to face the group. My older cousins are on the floor and my uncle is simply standing to the side, arms crossed.

The lake house has never been a very comforting place. Too many hot nights spent crowded next to my siblings in sleeping bags have made it feel claustrophobic. Too many meals spent picking at unappetizing food have made me feel unwelcome.

But now, two weeks after Christmas, sitting with colorful boxes and cards laid out in front of me, I can tolerate it.

I unwrap the small gift in my hand, being careful not to rip the decorative paper.

It's a small piece of cardstock holding a cheap set of 50 stud earrings.

“I didn't know what kind you would want,” my aunt says, still smiling, “so I got a variety.”

I thank her. I'm already looking through the set, picking out the shapes that I like and dislike.

The focus of my family shifts to my cousin; one year older than me and next in line to gift-unwrapping. I'm still looking at my earrings.

Which pair should I wear today? Which will I wear tomorrow? Which do I already

know I will never wear?

It's my brother's turn to open the little bag in front of him, but I don't look up from my earrings.

I'm 9 years old and I'm sifting through my grandmother's jewelry with my sister by my side. My mom is in the next room over, helping empty out half the closet.

I select a pair of silver drops with dolphins etched on the side and show them to my sister. She shrugs.

Mine now.

We're both sitting cross-legged on the carpet beside my grandparents' bed, where one pillow has laid cold for too many days now.

It's too quiet in the house, but neither of us have the words to fill the silence.

I pick out a pair of green moons while my sister turns back to the desk and starts going through the necklaces. Years from now, the moons will disappear from my jewelry drawer and reappear in her ears, and she will claim that she always had that pair.

A pair of blue triangles catch my eye. I remember what they looked like on my grandmother, standing out from her cropped grey hair. I pick them out and set them to the side with the other pairs I'm taking home.

Eventually my sister and I will have claimed the ones we want, and the remaining jewelry will get sent off to my cousins or donated. The jewelry box will go to my mom, the closet will stay half-empty, and one of the pillows will stay cold.

For now, I hum softly while selecting a pair of gold hoops.

I'm 15 years old and I'm sobbing my eyes out in front of my parents.



The first episode of “The Owl House” season 3 just came out last evening.

My father throws a box of tissues at me as I recount the story of Flapjack's death, wiggling my fingers in the air to represent how his body disintegrated in sparks of gold.

I describe the other characters' faces in the moment, and my mother laughs at me when I have to stop to blow my nose.

“Shut up,” I say in between sobs. “It's just so sad.”

They don't get it.

I go to my phone and spend a few minutes searching before pulling up a compilation of Flapjack scenes. But seeing all his sweet interactions with Hunter sets me off again, and then I'm trying to describe their relationship without getting tears all over my phone.

“He was Hunter's first friend, and now he's dead. Why are you laughing at this?”

It's a week later, and my fa-

ther is driving me home from school. We stop at the mailbox; he pulls out a small package and his eyes light up.

He tosses it to me. I look up in confusion. He waggles his eyebrows.

I cautiously open the package, shooting him more confused looks while he continues down our driveway. The ridiculously long path, riddled with potholes, gives me plenty of time to pull out a set of Flapjack earrings.

They're horribly bright, and cheesy, and not at all my style, and yet I nearly burst into tears once more.



CLARABEL RENONDO
Student Clarabel Renondo writes about sentimental memories behind earrings in her collection.

A warning about mosquito-spread virus ‘EEE’

By Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Throughout my writing career, I have never written news articles in the hopes to scare my readers.

I firmly believe that the readers' thoughts and feelings should always come first in designing any type of writing. My writing is created for the sole purpose to inform you.

This article was created not to scare you, but to simply inform you about what is going on in the natural world, specifically the rare but dangerous virus known as Eastern Equine Encephalitis.

This virus is also known as EEE and is zoonotic, meaning it can jump from non-human animal hosts to human hosts. EEE travels through the bite of an infected mosquito.

The Vermont Department of health states, “EEE virus typically infects birds, and in most years, it remains in bird populations, posing little danger to humans and horses. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on infected birds. If an infected mosquito bites a horse, human or other susceptible animal, the animal or person can become sick. The virus that causes EEE is only spread by mosquitoes. People, horses and deer do not spread the disease.”

Eastern Equine Encephalitis commonly affects horses. However, other animals like pheasants, donkeys, alpacas and emus have also been known to carry it.

According to the state of Connecticut Mosquito Management Programs official site, “Most people infected with EEE virus do not become ill. When symptoms do occur, they can range from mild fever and headache to coma. Other symptoms include high fever, fatigue, muscle aches, neck stiffness, tremors, or confusion. Severe cases include inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) which can lead to coma, convulsions, and death.”

The state of Connecticut Mosquito Management Program's official site also states that symptoms are likely to occur three to 10 days after an infected Mosquito bites a person.

Unfortunately, this disease also has no known cures. The state of Connecticut Mosquito Management Program's site also gives insight on the vaccine for Eastern Equine Encephalitis.

“There is no cure for EEE, and three of every 10 people who get the disease die from it. Doctors provide supportive treatment, lower the fever, and ease the pressure on the brain and spinal cord. Some people who survive this disease will be permanently disabled and

only about half recover completely.”

The site also states that the reason why there is no vaccine for Eastern Equine Encephalitis is because this virus occurs so infrequently in humans. The Vermont Department of health also gives information of the EEE virus in Vermont.

“EEE was first detected in Vermont in 2011. From July through mid-October, mosquitoes are collected from sites around the state and tested for EEE at the Health Department Laboratory. This season there have already been over 70 groups of mosquitoes that tested positive for EEE virus across more than 15 towns, compared with 14 groups across three towns that tested positive in 2023.

The Vermont Department of health also states that the high-risk towns include Alburgh, Burlington, Colchester, Sudbury, Swanton and Whiting Vermont.

“That the first human case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis in Vermont since 2012, was found in Chittenden County” the Vermont Department of Health site states. “The EEE virus activity in Vermont clusters near acidic, hardwood swamps, most commonly in Franklin, Grand Isle, Addison, and northern Rutland counties. However, EEE virus could be circulating in other parts of the

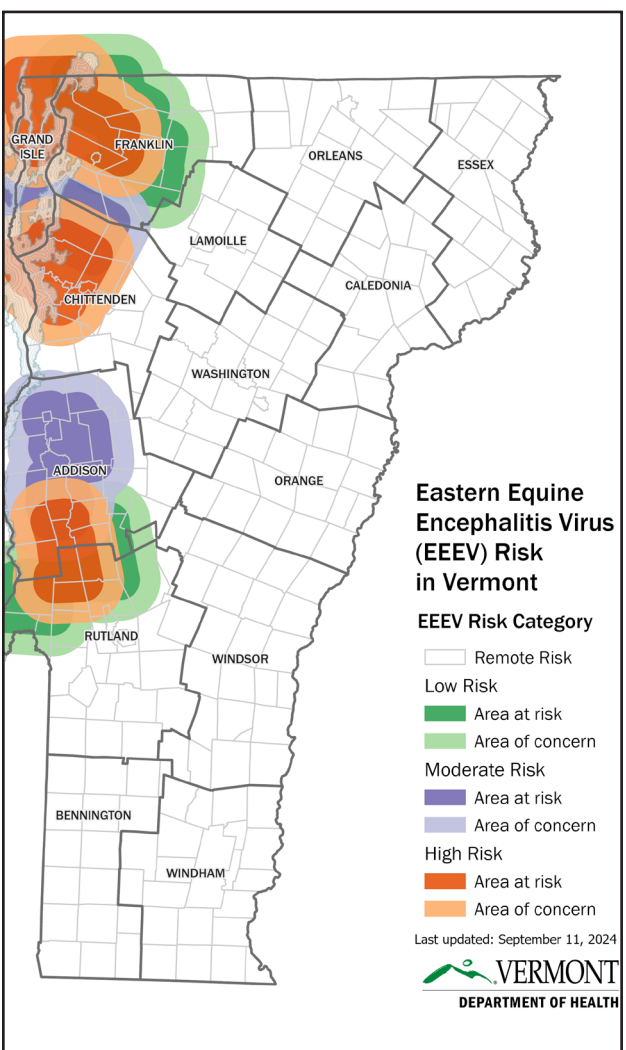
state, so all Vermonters should take precautions to prevent mosquito bites.”

There are ways you can keep yourself and your family safe until the first hard frost comes to Vermont, which usually occurs between the third week of September and the first week of October, according to the National Weather Service.

The Vermont Department of Health strongly recommends “That people in towns at high risk avoid spending time outdoors as much as possible between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. to avoid mosquitoes that could carry the virus. The recommendation will be in place until the first hard frost that kills mosquitoes.”

In addition, please make sure to wear long sleeves, and cover all parts of your skin when going outside especially at dawn or dusk. Also, avoid any still moving water sources outside, and try to avoid applying excessive perfumes or colognes.

I really hope that you are not scared or become paranoid by this article. My intent is not to scare you, but to inform and help you. We only have a couple more weeks until the first hard frost hits us, and we need to stay alert in the meantime. Please stay safe, and keep yourselves both mentally and physically healthy.



The Triple E virus is found in Vermont, with high-risk areas being Alburgh, Burlington, Colchester, Sudbury, Swanton and Whiting.



**Vermont State University**
about 4 months ago

5 Days!
Commencement is this weekend! To celebrate, we're announcing a very special honorary degree recipient. Max the Cat has been an affectionate member of the Castleton family for years. He lives with his wonderful owners on Seminary Street and loves socializing with friends outside Leavenworth. While his adventures may have slowed, Max exemplifies the #CastletonWay and we are honored to have him as a member of VTSU's #firstclass.
"With a resounding purr of approval from t... See more



Vermont State University's

CLASS OF 2024!

Dr. Max Dow '24











Vermont State University

Max Dow

Doctor of Literature

 450

 51

 445

**Sharon Speigner**
Congratulations Dr. Max you are the Cats Meow 🐾
14w

**Judi Basolo**
This is MEOWVALOUS! Concatulations to Dr Max!
16w 8

**David Sciascia**
Great. Now my accomplishments as a senior computer specialists are being outstripped by a cat who graduated college. Great....
17w 5

**David Sciascia** replied · 6 Replies

**Eugenia Seleznova**
good luck to Max in finding a tenure-track position or a decent postdoc in a current market 🙌
17w 3

**陳酒松**
來自台灣虎斑貓奴的祝賀，恭喜 Max Dow 榮獲博士學位！
16w 4

**Ching Swen** replied · 1 Reply

**Pepe Galo**
Felicidades Max 🐾 y que sigan los éxitos 🍀
16w 2

**Pedro Jose Mendez**
Karina Ar Per El CATedrático hará una ponencia en la Universidad de MICHlgan
16w 2

**Lydia Mattlage**
Wonderful, animals can steal your heart.

COURTESY JESS EMERY

Dr. Max:

Social media played a huge role in Max’s rise to global fame. Photos of Max, often reclining by Leavenworth Hall or following a tour with incoming freshmen, were everywhere. Fans from all over the world have been commenting on Max’s story.

“As a human who has earned a doctorate, I approve of Dr. Max!” one comment

read under the Washington Post Facebook post on Max.

“Great. Now my accomplishments as a senior computer specialist are being outstripped by a cat who graduated college. Great,” another commenter joked.

With all the fame and celebrity treatment Max is getting, Dow said he is still the normal cat who just likes to be

involved.

“Max has no idea the fame he’s getting. He’s just like whatever. He doesn’t care, he’s doing his thing, students are back on campus, and he’s able to spend the day with you,” she said.

And in that role, Max continues to inspire, calm nerves, and remind everyone of the simple pleasures of life – like

a good nap in the sun.

“I was very proud. It’s a secret hidden gem that Max does so much for our students that people can’t even articulate what he does. I can walk by in that student pathway and I can smile at 10 students, maybe two will look up, but when Max walks down that path, every single student stops, takes a moment, and interacts with

him, and every student leaves with a smile. That is magical,” Duncan said.

As the fall semester begins, students are once again greeted by our favorite tabby cat, but this time it’s Dr. Max. His global following continues to grow, but to the students of Castleton, he’ll always just be Max, the favorite campus cat with a Ph.D. in purr-fection.

Max is not homeless or a stray, he’s just always out and about. If you see Max roaming around after 5 P.M. give his mother Ashely Dow a call! Her number is (802)-369-9375.

Convocation:

“I want to thank you for recommending VTSU to your friends and your classmates, and for everything that we’ve done and continue to do in support of our university,” said Bergh in his announcement video.

The press release noted 1,700 new students, significantly boosting both in and out-of-state populations.

“The Class of 2028 represents 35 states and 11 countries, with students hailing from as far away as Florida to California and Italy to Japan. In fact, out-of-state student enrollment is up 13% across all VTSU campuses, enriching the student population and diversity of the campuses. 19% of the

new class identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) and 56% are first-generation college students,” wrote Hasler in the release.

Vice President of Student Success Kelley Beckwith and Vermont State Colleges System Chancellor Beth Mauch shared more good news, citing positive trends in retention and internal transfers from the Community College of Vermont to VTSU.

“We’ll continue this essential work in partnership with the state and with our communities to carry this year’s success through the recruitment and ultimately the retention of our future classes,” concluded Bergh.

Library:

“In my previous life, I was a chef, and I kind of look at it as making soup,” Smith explained. “You take a foundation of whatever the story is and just...whatever brings the most flavor and most passion to that project. It depends on the flow of the story,” Smith added.

The time frame, as pointed out by Gonzalez, turned out to be much more time-consuming than originally planned.

“It was a long, long time... We initially wanted to finish it in 2023, but it got to a point where...this is gonna be a lot longer than I thought,” Gonzalez said. “And also, we completely missed out on two key interviews...that quite literally changed how the story was gonna go,” he added.

Two others who were a big part of the project were Lily Doton and Jacob Ruben, who were unable to attend the interview, but were certainly huge contributors to the film. Fellow student and contributor on the film, Maddie Lindgren was, however, present and deserves as much praise for her part in the project.

It was clear to see how much this documentary meant to all of those involved.

“I think, for me...I’ve been a part of some pretty crazy things, but this is probably one of the only things in my life where it was something that was bigger than myself,” Gonzalez said. “I felt the due diligence of using my creativity and using my voice to make this film,” he added.

Smith also added to this sentiment with a heartfelt message to his audience.

“What I want people to take away from it is that...you have a voice, and to use that voice,” Smith said.

It has been a crazy journey for these creators, but they are far from done with getting the film’s reach out. According to Professor Sam Davis-Boyd, the film will be shown in film festivals as well as having a showing at the Castleton Campus at Vermont State University on Dec. 11, 2024.

Campus scenes

RIVER MYSKA AND MADDIE LINDGREN

Some new faces but same end goal

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton field hockey team is looking to avenge last season's promising but disappointing end to the LEC conference tournament. The Spartans lost a nail biter in the semifinals 2-1 to the eventual champs, the University of Southern Maine.

Coming into the season, the Spartans have both experience and some newness to the program. The team hired Alex Ruiz as a graduate assistant this fall. Ruiz, from Long Island, New York, has always had a passion for coaching and wanted to find the correct fit as she searched for a program.

"I wanted to continue my passion in coaching and I liked what Castleton field hockey had to offer. Their culture on the team, the girls all bonding together as a whole and making it far into the postseason within the conference," Ruiz said.

Ruiz has always wanted to have some coaching experience under her belt because she

feels that field hockey isn't prioritized in the United States. That's why coaching has always been at the forefront of her mind because of her passion for winning and being a part of a field hockey program.

Transitioning from player to coach can be a challenge and Ruiz has recognized some of the adjustments she's needed to make.

"Understanding that coaching is different from playing at the Division 3 level," Ruiz said. "Having different expectations as a player as opposed to a coach is different because you must understand how to speak to players and get the best out of them."

With the adjustments Ruiz has made, she's also learned a lot from head coach Emily Douglas. Douglas was a big reason why Ruiz decided to take the job, and she's gravitated towards Douglas through her coaching style.

"Coach Douglas' winning mindset and determination for the team's end goal has been encouraging to see," Ruiz said.

"The conditioning everyday was a shock to me because not many sports teams do that here so seeing that helps me understand her expectations for the team."

Coach Douglas has developed a well-established culture with the team competing late into the postseason for two consecutive years. Douglas has high expectations for the team as they look to build upon what they've created.

"There's a lot of hunger within the team. We learned that we need consistency in every game," Douglas said. "Last season we played a little inconsistent and it hurt us so this year we understand where we should be and we're working towards getting there."

The team graduated a handful of upperclassmen, most notably Emily Harris, but Douglas is confident in the returners and the incoming first year players the team has assembled.

"I'm excited for this freshman class, it's the biggest freshman class we've had. The freshmen have done a good job

of adapting to the college game and they've come in ready to learn," Douglas said. "They've done a good job of stepping in and knowing what they need to do so yes we're starting to rebuild but still focusing on winning."

Senior Haley Lassen has been around for a while and as a contributing player for the program. Lassen has gotten a chance to see the development of the program and been appreciative of Douglas.

"Even though it's hard I love how much Coach Douglas pushes us even though I don't like it at times, but it maximizes my ability and pushes us to max out our potential," Lassen said.

Douglas's diligent approach has allowed the program to evolve.

"We won't tolerate negativity towards our teammates or coaches, so it forces us to become close as we push each other on and off the field," Lassen said. "The connection and hunger we have to win it all has also allowed us to be together."

As a leader Lassen, looks to



PHOTO FROM KATIE STAGER

Mackenna Roberson ready to shoot the ball.

continue to lead by example by supporting her teammates and making connections on and off the field. Lassen understands that seniority comes with a challenge but it's a challenge she's looking to take on.

"It feels weird being an older player, coming up in the program and to be the senior is good, but I try not to get caught up in it," Lassen said. "Having seniority is a challenge, it forces

es you to dig deep and set an example for how things should be."

The Spartans will look to build momentum throughout the next couple weeks as they continue out of conference play. They'll look to establish more cohesiveness and consistency each game so they're firing on all cylinders once conference play rolls around.

Alfani brothers reunite as Spartans

By Annika Nelson
Castleton Spartan

Castleton freshman Jacques Alfani has quickly become a breakout star for the men's soccer team — but his road to VTSU Castleton is arguably more interesting than his soccer prowess.

Alfani was born in a refugee camp in Tanzania, where he lived for 11 years.

It is his dream to go back to Tanzania, and he got his passport last year. Last year he and his older brother gained their official U.S. citizenship and hopefully this summer he will be able to go back, he said.

"When I was there, the only activities I was doing were soccer and school," Alfani said.

He and his family arrived in the United States in July of 2018. They landed in Burlington, where they met up with his mom's sister, who was already in Vermont. After living in Burlington for about three months, they got a house in Colchester.

Alfani started in 7th grade, and his younger brother started in 6th. His older brother, Adolphe, started in sophomore year.

It was tough being in a new country with a different language and food.

"Everything was different," said Alfani.

It was sometimes tough asking for something he needed because google translate was no help, Alfani said.

During his freshman year of high school, he made the junior varsity soccer team. He played, but he described it as a "tough



PHOTO FROM CASTLETONSPORTS

Jacques Alfani celebrating one of his first career goals

challenge."

Soccer in America is different from the way he played in Africa.

"It was confusing," said Alfani.

His sophomore year, he made varsity, but he didn't get the chance to play with Adolphe. His younger brother was a freshman that year, but he got injured in the first game.

It was this season that one of Alfani's soccer teammates convinced him to join track.

"I didn't know what track was. I had never done it in my life," he said

He and his younger brother

began running track, and they were pretty good at it.

Alfani said that his brother is faster than him in sprints, but he is faster in distance.

In his junior season of soccer, Alfani scored seven goals and had 10 assists. His team made it to the final but sadly lost 2-1.

"We take the pain," he said.

Senior year of soccer, the team lost in the semis after the game went to penalty kicks.

In his senior year of track, Alfani was 1.18 seconds away from beating the school record for the 400m. He was offered spots to run track in college,

but he wanted to focus on school and soccer.

This season at Castleton is the first time Jacques and Adolphe are playing on a team together. It is what Alfani is most excited about, along with getting to know all the people and winning.

"He's an offensive threat and you can't have too few of those. His best soccer is ahead of him and I'm anxious to see how high of a ceiling he has in his four years on campus," said Castleton men's soccer head coach, John O'Connor.

When asked what it's like playing with Adolphe for the



PHOTO FROM ANNIKA NELSON

Alfani inside Glenbrook gym

first time, Alfani said, "I can't imagine it, we grew up together playing on the same team ... I hope good things are going to come soon."

Alfani said that his goal this season is to get into the playoffs after not last season.

"I'll do my best, because my brother's here for only one more year. It's one of the reasons I came here, to play with him," he said.

On the topic of Jacques and Adolphe playing together, O'Connor said, "It is exciting for us now as they are both very good players who connect well on the field."

"Jacques' goal at Fitchburg was on an assist from Adolphe, so I think that is pretty cool," he said.

O'Connor continued to speak highly of the brother duo.

"They have different personalities, but they certainly both value their time at Castleton and the education they are getting. I think Adolphe has done very well here and feels at home, so it seemed natural to have his brother follow in his footsteps. Getting a third Alfani next year would be awesome too," he said.

Hockey, culture and team bonding in Europe

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Our hockey team's trip to Riga was a crazy adventure, beginning with a 15-hour travel day that set the atmosphere for an unforgettable experience. We started with a four-hour bus ride from Castleton to Boston, then embarked on a seven-hour flight to Frankfurt, Germany. Despite the length of the flight, the boys managed to socialize and catch some sleep. After a brief two-hour layover in Frankfurt, we boarded our final flight to Riga, ready to explore Latvia's capital.

One memorable moment occurred when Dominic Rodrigue was asked to hold a stranger's baby while the parents sorted out their stroller at baggage claim. Once we collected our luggage and breathed in the Riga air, we headed to our hotel, but first we stopped at the rink to drop off our gear. We had some issues with room availability, giving us extra time to explore Old Town Riga. This gave us a quick glimpse of the city and an opportunity to scout potential spots for dinner. After settling into our rooms, we ventured out to explore more of Old Town, determined to stay awake and adjust to the new time zone. By the end of the night, everyone was exhausted but happy to be in Riga finally.

Day two marked the start of our hockey. Some of the boys arrived early at Inbox Arena to assist with a youth camp, while the rest of us prepared for our first practice in Riga. Although



PHOTOS FROM CASTLETON MENS HOCKEY

(Top) Mens hockey out in Old Town Riga, before the night of exploring and karaoke happened on day six.

(Bottom) The team after its final game against MSOE at Volvo Arena.

the practice was a bit rusty, it felt great to be back on the ice together after the offseason. Following practice, we enjoyed lunch at the hotel before exploring more of Riga. We split into two groups for dinner: one group went to a wood-fired grill, while the other enjoyed a meal at a charming patio res-

taurant. The food was unreal. After dinner, we regrouped and explored the city further, eventually winding down with a fun karaoke session where Josef Vyvial's rendition of Lenny Kravitz's "Fly Away" was hilarious and unforgettable.

Day three was our first game in Riga. We began with a team

breakfast and a morning skate at Inbox Arena, preparing for a friendly match against the Latvian team. Our journey to the Volvo Arena was a bit chaotic due to miscommunication with our bus driver, resulting in an unexpected detour on the highway. Despite this, we arrived and prepared for the game.

Unfortunately, the game didn't go our way, but it was a building block for us. Afterward, we had dinner at a restaurant that shockingly fit all 21 of us, and we enjoyed some karaoke and bonded as a team.

Day four was dedicated to recovering from the previous day's game and preparing for our rematch against Latvia. The day began with some of us helping out at the camp again, followed by a bounce back practice. For dinner, we had the freedom to choose our own meals, leading to a split between those who enjoyed kebabs and others who had an unreal Italian dining experience. Best pasta ever. We finished off the night with a quick ice cream run, racing to the shop just before closing. The ice cream was worth racing there for it.

The tournament games continued on day five with a match against Latvia. We had a morning skate, a pregame meal, and then traveled to the rink with better preparation than before. Although we lost 3-0, the game was an improvement from the first game. After the game, we had a relaxing dinner and spent the evening hanging out and bonding in our rooms.

Day six featured a highly anticipated game against Austria, where Simon Brenner has personal ties because he's from there. Despite starting the day with optimism, we fell 4-0. The game gave us a good look at what we needed to do as a team moving forward. Postgame, we explored Riga's nightlife, visiting the Rock Cafe and enjoying its various

entertainment options, from karaoke to pool tables. This night out was a super cool way to experience the local culture and unwind as a team.

On day seven, we enjoyed a much-needed break with a day of rest and recovery. Many of us used the hotel's spa with a sauna and pool. We also went on a sightseeing tour around Riga, which offered a new perspective on the city especially because it was Riga's birthday. The whole day allowed us to fully immerse ourselves in the local culture.

Our final day, day eight, was spent playing our last game of the tournament against Milwaukee School of Engineering. The game was tight till the end, but we fell short with a 2-0 defeat, including an empty-net goal. After the game, we relaxed at Jurmala, a beach town on the Baltic Sea. The beach provided a refreshing contrast to the city and was a perfect way to wrap up our trip. We spent our final evening in Riga catching up with players from other teams and reflecting on our experiences.

The journey home began with an early wake-up call and a long travel day back to Castleton. Despite the exhaustion, the trip was an unforgettable experience filled with hockey, exploration, and team bonding. The memories made in Riga will be remembered by the boys forever.

Women’s soccer looking at bounce back season

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

After a hard fought 2023 campaign, the Castleton women’s soccer team is on the rebound. The girls in green are off to a strong 3 and 2 start this 2024 season. They hosted in state rivals Norwich for their season opener and won by a commanding 2-0. With an early marker from Alexis Billings, and a late insurance goal from freshman Natalie Webster in her first collegiate game.

Later that week the girls hosted a strong Suny Plattsburgh team in which they lost a 1-0 outing that came right down to the wire. Castleton held control for much of the match and generated many chances but ultimately fell short in the dying minutes.

The team followed the loss up with an important win over

New England College by a score of 3-1. Maggie McKearin had an early goal in the second half to make it 2-0 for the Spartans that was ultimately the game winner.

In their fourth match of the season, they dropped a very close 3-2 game with RPI in which Alexis Billings and Maggie McKearin found themselves on the score sheet again. A goal from RPI in the 86th minute however was the difference this time around.

On the past weekend though, the girls bounced back again and made the game look easy against another out of conference opponent Suny Potsdam. In this 4-1 victory, senior leaders Lauren Fotter and Rylee Pepin got in on the action with assists, and leading scorer Alexis Billings recorded her fifth goal in as many games.

“The season is starting out strong. We are coming together

really well on the field this year, and it’s helping us get the outcome we want. We still have a lot more work to do, but we are excited to keep working hard and connecting more as a team.” Said Alexis Billings when asked about the tone of the team through the first couple weeks.

“So far this season, I am really happy with our progress and our ability to compete with challenging teams. I look forward to heading into conference play this weekend and showing the rest of the conference what we’re made of this year!” said Annin Daley echoing the sentiment of excitement the squad has for their progress thus far.

The Spartans will be at home Saturday Sept. 21 against conference opponent Rhode Island College as the girls look to continue their winning ways.



PHOTO FROM KATIE STAGER

The Spartans huddled up before their game against Suny Plattsburgh.

Spartans bring home the Sap Bucket

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

On the four-yard line, the Spartans lined up on offense with Tyson Hall at quarterback. The ball snaps, it’s a quarterback keeper. Hall breaks free down the right sideline, 96 yards to the endzone to break Moe Harris’s former record for longest rush in school history while also putting Castleton up 14-6 on route to a 14-12 win.

The Castleton Spartans football team faced off against in-state rival Norwich in the battle for the Sap Bucket on Sept. 7. In the heated defensive battle, it saw the Spartans come out on top and bring home the Sap Bucket for the first time since 2017.

“It’s a big deal I think for our campus because Norwich is a rival in most of our sports. Being week one, it’s the first time we’ve ever played them week one, so it was a big deal for our players,” said head coach Tyler Higley.

The game started off with Castleton getting on the board in the first quarter, when Joshua Colegrove rushed into the endzone to go up 7-0. The touchdown didn’t come easy as prior to Colegrave rushing in, Caezar Williams hauled in a 77-yard reception to give the Spartans a shot in the redzone at the 10-yard line.

Throughout the game it was a back-and-forth battle on the defensive side of the ball. Norwich would score in the second quarter but would miss the extra point to make the score 7-6 for the Spartans.

Then in the third quarter, the Cadets would have Castleton backed up into its own redzone, but Ian Detulleo would come down with an interception to set up the Spartans to make the school record setting play from Hall on the next offensive drive.

“It was definitely a dogfight from the beginning. Back and forth game that was definitely leaning hard on defensive play. And having it be such a close game going into halftime, we needed a big play,” said Hall, a freshman. “I’m happy the coaches trusted me enough to



PHOTOS FROM CASTLETONSPORTS

(Top) Wyatt Jackson, Kevin McDonough and Mike Morrissey marching down field with the Sap Bucket.
(Bottom) Football after the win celebrating the Sap Bucket.

put the ball in my hands on our own three-yard line and the execution of that play was flawless and running down the sideline knowing I was going to score and give us a bigger lead was indescribable.”

Then in the fourth quarter, the Spartans were up 14-12 after the Cadets scored a touchdown with under a minute remaining. But had to go for the two-point conversion due to the missed field goal earlier.

Backs against the wall, the Spartans came up with the stop.

DeTulleo would come up with the onside kick recovery then quarterback Wes Cournoyer would kneel it down to

run out the clock for the Castleton victory.

The Spartans were led defensively by seniors Kevin McDonough with 14 tackles and Tyler Buxton with nine tackles and a sack and a half.

On offense, the team was led by Hall with 92 rushing yards and a touchdown and Cournoyer with 177 passing yards.

“It’s been way too long since the sap bucket has been where it belongs. I’ve been a part of the last three losses against Norwich, and it feels good to be a part of the team to end that streak. It was a hard-fought game all the way around and it was an amazing feeling to come out on top. There’s no better way to start the season, going into conference play with a 1-0 record is huge for the team’s morale and confidence,” McDonough said.

The last time Castleton brought home the Sap Bucket, Higley was a graduate assistant coach for the defensive backs. Now in his first season as head coach, Higley and the Spartans look to build off the emotional win against the Cadets.

“The message to the players when we started meeting after the game was, coming off an emotional win, can we battle complacency, and I think when you come off those kind of wins as players sometimes you have a natural instinct to know, we’re good, we won, we know who we are but there are a lot of things we didn’t do well in the game,” Higley said.

The Spartans followed up their big Sap Bucket victory with their first MASCAC conference win against Framingham State, coming out on top 32-13. The Spartans were led on offense by Cournoyer with 190 passing yards and three touchdowns as well as Williams with 174 receiving yards and three touchdowns. On defense, Julian Chiemingo Rivera dominated with three sacks on the day.

Castleton looks to continue its hot start with its first home game of the season against Massachusetts Maratime on Sept 21. This will mark this year’s Homecoming game as well as Family weekend for the Spartans.

Contributions to story from Carly Centeno

Men’s soccer steering in the right direction

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton Spartans Men’s Soccer Team Kicks off the season with a strong performance.

The Spartans are known for their tenacity and skills and have shown much promise with a combination of standout performances and thrilling finishes for their first game of the season.

The season commenced on August 31 with a hard fought 2-1 victory over Russel Sage College. In this home opener, Matt Spiller made an impact by scoring off a free kick in the 36th minute, giving Castleton 1-0 lead.

Xander Berthiaume, first year goalkeeper, made his first collegiate debut, with a plethora of saves.

Russel Sage capitalized on a penalty call to equalize, but the Spartans showed resilience that wouldn’t let it stop them.

A red card for the other team was given which brought them down to 10 men, the Spartans took the chance and in the 87th minute freshman Jacques Alfani scored his first goal to secure the win for Castleton.

their strong start with a 2-0 victory over Fitchburg State.

The game was marked by an early goal from Liam Cramer, who scored off a corner kick from Toby Ritzkowski just two minutes in.

The Alfani brothers combined for Castleton’s second goal in the 31st minute, with Adolphe Alfani providing the assist for Jacques Alfani’s second goal of the season.

With seven stops from goalie Berthiaume, the Spartans’ defense held Fitchburg State at a distant and earned the goalkeepers first career shutout.

Castleton battled Clarkson University to a 1-1 draw. Matt Spiller once again played a key role, delivering a precise free kick to Tanner Curtis, who scored in the 12th minute to give Castleton an early lead.

However, Clarkson leveled the score in the 40th minute, and despite numerous chances on both sides, neither team could find a winning goal. Berthiaume’s five saves and a crucial defensive stop by Wyatt Robbie ensured the game remained tied, allowing Castleton to maintain their unbeaten record.

Junior captain Michael O’Connor had some thoughts

on the first few games of the season. “I think the season has been going well so far! We’ve already started to gel well on and off the field, and it has showed in our first few games. Starting undefeated in the first 3 games was a huge boost for us,” O’Connor said.

“One of the things we’ve talked about working on the most going forward is controlling the controllable: letting go of the parts of the game that we can’t change, and not leaving the parts of a game that we can affect up to chance.”

The Vermont State University Castleton men’s soccer team suffered their first loss of the season with a narrow 1-0 defeat to Colby-Sawyer on Sunday.

Graduate JP Maul, the veteran goalkeeper, made his season debut for the team with an impressive nine saves.

Despite dominating the game with a total of 19 shots and excellent defensive plays, the Spartans couldn’t see the back of the net.

Colby-Sawyer’s lone goal came from a corner kick in the 68th minute. Castleton will look to bounce back in their upcoming SUNYAC matches against SUNY Potsdam and

SUNY Canton this weekend.

The Spartans struggled to perform in their 2023 season with a record of 4-11-3 and in conference it was 1-4-3.

Junior captain Michael O’Connor promises a different outcome for this year’s season. “I think what separates us from last year is our resilience. All the guys know what we must do to be successful, but it is the willingness to do the hard things that I think everyone has begun to realize. Nothing is routine to us anymore, and we are unwilling to settle for anything less than what we know we can achieve.”

Castleton is showing promising signs of a competitive season. When asked, head coach, John O’Connor what he thought about this strong start he stated, “I think the season so far is going well. I think the team has really matured and has developed since last season. The work they did in the spring and over the summer has paid off.”

Fans can look forward to more exciting soccer as VTSU Castleton continues to showcase their talent and determination throughout the season.

The Spartans’ blend of experienced playmakers and

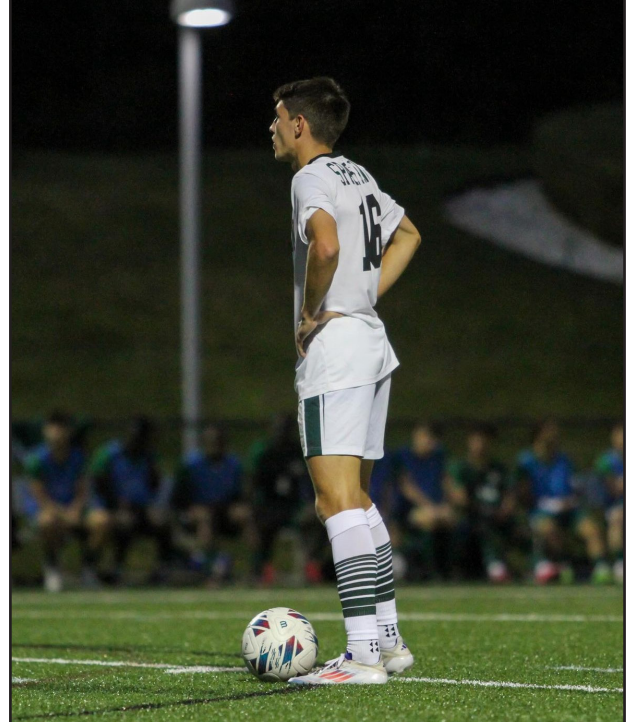


PHOTO FROM KATIE STAGER

Matt Spiller standing over the ball ready to kick off.

dynamic newcomers suggests a bright future as they aim to build on their early successes.

The Spartans face off this weekend against two SUNY schools. On Saturday Sept. 14 they played Suny Potsdam, which ended in a tie (0-0). On

Sunday they faced off against Suny Canton, which ended in a tie again at 1-1. The Spartans are back in action at Rhode Island College on Saturday Sept. 21.



NEWS

Professor Pat Brougham is back on the road after recovery.

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ARTS

First play of the year provides comic relief and tough topics.

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Dual-sport athletes detail how they do it.

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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, October 4, 2024

VTSU Castleton students are registered to vote

By Sophie Moore
Spartan contributor

The Campus Center at Vermont State University Castleton was bustling with students, professors, and even an NBC reporter for National Voter Registration Day.

With the presidential election coming fast, talks of voter registration and the election are a daily topic of conversation in the media.

Taylor Swift broke the internet by endorsing Kamala Harris as her pick president while encouraging younger and first-time voters to vote including resources on how to get involved.

According to Political Science professor Rich Clark, her statement caused an increase of millions of views on various election information sites.

When asked about his feelings on Swift's announcement, Clark believes that "anything to create interest among young voters is good." He knows oftentimes younger voters feel uncomfortable and confused by voting and thinks any action to clear that up is great.

Out of 19 VTSU Castleton students interviewed in an informal poll, 17 said they were already registered to vote and those who said no, had plans to register quickly before the upcoming election.

Several students felt strongly about this election and have clear plans to vote this November. Sophomore Pajua Gamba feels that being registered to vote is very important to them because "while it is only one vote, which doesn't matter by itself, everyone's vote combined does."

Junior Liv Cormier said she is casting her votes to ensure the policies and laws that benefit people will continue to stay in action.

Contrary to the positive feelings among VTSU voters, student Samuel Zinner said although he is registered, he feels the popular vote is a sham, but will be voting anyway.

While not everyone interviewed was as positive as Gamba — some even saying they feel like their votes don't truly matter — Clark discourages this behavior and states that "all elections are important."

He said it's important that

voters don't become too cynical, especially in this current climate where 35% of Americans believe that the 2020 presidential election was rigged, even when extensive research shows it was not.

Ruben Somda, Content Lab president, shared some of his findings after collecting data on voter registration around campus. Most of the students who weren't registered to vote fell into two categories, he said.

"Those who choose not to vote and those who don't know how to and are intimidated by the process," Somda said.

In the category of those students who chose not to vote, Somda echoed what some students said in the poll.

"There's a strong mentality of [students thinking their] vote means nothing," he said.

This category falls into the pattern of cynicism that Clark discouraged against.

On the other side of the spectrum, Somda found those who are too daunted by the process are "more receptive to learning about the process and often times take the necessary steps necessary to vote."

One of those necessary



SOPHIE MOORE

NBC reporters interview VTSU Castleton students and faculty about the presidential election and voter registration at the Campus Center.

steps could be a new app Clark and his class are promoting called Motivate. The app shares resources and information to young voters easily and on their phones.

Local NBC news reporter James Maloney, who was sent to cover VTSU's voter registration celebration, thinks the

new app sets VTSU apart from other voter registration efforts because it's a newer and easier way to get younger voters involved and there is no better place to do that than on a college campus.

For more information on this new app, you can check out the website at www.motivate.us.

tivote.us.

Somda encourages students who are not involved to get involved.

"Every vote in any election matters. It gets you engaged with your community and the politics that affect you," he said.

Homecoming game brought people together

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

This year, homecoming was even bigger and better than the last.

Of course, the game is the main focus of the day. There's always a huge crowd in the stands. You could hear the cow bells ringing and cheers from a mile away.

However, this year, there was as much activity off the field as there was on the field.

Families arrived at Hoff Hall lot early in the morning to set up tents, tables, and games for an early start to a day of tailgating.

"The craziest year was my first year here and coming up to this tailgating and the comradery of people and the friendships and the people up here has been so nice. So nice. I love it," said Chalice Gunther, number 64 Mitchell Gunther's dad.

Homecoming and tailgating are guaranteed to bring a sense of community to the school.

Although VTSU Castleton has experienced a lot of change in the last few years, the comradery and welcomeness is a constant.

For Gunther, the day isn't only about football but spending time with other respectful people.

"Where we come from, you don't run into a whole lot of people like that. It's a different kind of people up here," he said.



Homecoming 2024 provided exciting football, tailgating and games in the parking lot and Hall of Fame inductees including Tyler Carpenter, whose two sons were pictured with Sparty and friends.

For others, this was their first year tailgating.

"It's exactly what I was hoping for. Just hang out, everybody has fun, meet a lot of people, talk to a lot of people,"

said Jerry Adams.

Plus, you can't forget about the food.

Walking through the rows of tailgaters, there's grilled meat, pasta salad galore, and



RIVER MYSKA, MADDIE LINDGREN AND COURTESY PHOTOS

you'll probably find a beer or two. All the tailgate goers are eager to invite people into their space, eager to share food and a good story.

Students also get a chance to

showcase their Spartan Pride.

One student, Laconia LeBrake, has been tailgating for two years with her boyfriend and both of their parents.

She's had a chance to watch

the tailgating scene evolve.

"I think it's gotten better. I think it's gotten bigger because like more people come to the school and more people see how the tailgating is and it makes more people want to tailgate," LeBrake said.

"Like, I know last year we got tickets last minute and there were tickets still available and the tickets sold out very fast this year," she said.

People also get more and more creative with their set up as the years go on, inviting more people into the tailgating scene.

"It's also really nice for them to have these random people to just come set up their own little table area. Like, the pillowcase thing was cool, the make your own ring, like that was great," LeBrake said.

"I got to do both of those. It was a really great turnout. Those lines, there was constantly people there. I never saw those tables empty."

Parents and players come out, as well as alumni. Which can be a great opportunity for them to reconnect with their old school.

"I definitely feel like the homecoming game and tailgating is what brings the school together because that's where you see everybody. That day, you see everybody," LeBrake said.

Campus construction commotion

Progress and setbacks loom as school is eager push for project completion



SAMUEL ZINNER

A photo from the top of a Woodruff Hall shows the construction on heating system lines.

By Samuel Zinner
Spartan contributor

Construction workers are busy fixing up the Castleton campus as the antiquated heating systems receive a necessary overhaul to protect its longevity.

Workers only recently broke ground on the southwest side of the library.

This particular update, deemed "absolutely necessary," by campus operations director James Lamountain, has overcome two pitfalls so far.

This first was securing a bid for the work to start, delaying the projected date of comple-

tion to somewhere in the end of October.

"The project was planned to be done by the end of the summer, but the school received bids later than expected. This was probably cause of the labor shortage and need for construction across the state," Lamountain said, referring to the crippling labor shortage New England has been experiencing for the last decade.

The bid had finally been secured after weeks of attempts, but this was not the end of Lamountain's tribulations.

"There was another hangup from the pipe manufacturer. The original completion date was the beginning of October,

but now it's looking like the end of the month," he said.

In an effort to renovate the essential heating systems campus-wide, Lamountain said that a "third party consulting company" has been hired to evaluate all components to hone in on further repairs and updates.

Although the delays have hindered the project, school faculty are hopeful these repairs will bring a new and permanent fix to the heating and cooling system on campus.

A faculty member who wished to remain anonymous said, "I believe it's been repaired five or six times while I've been here."

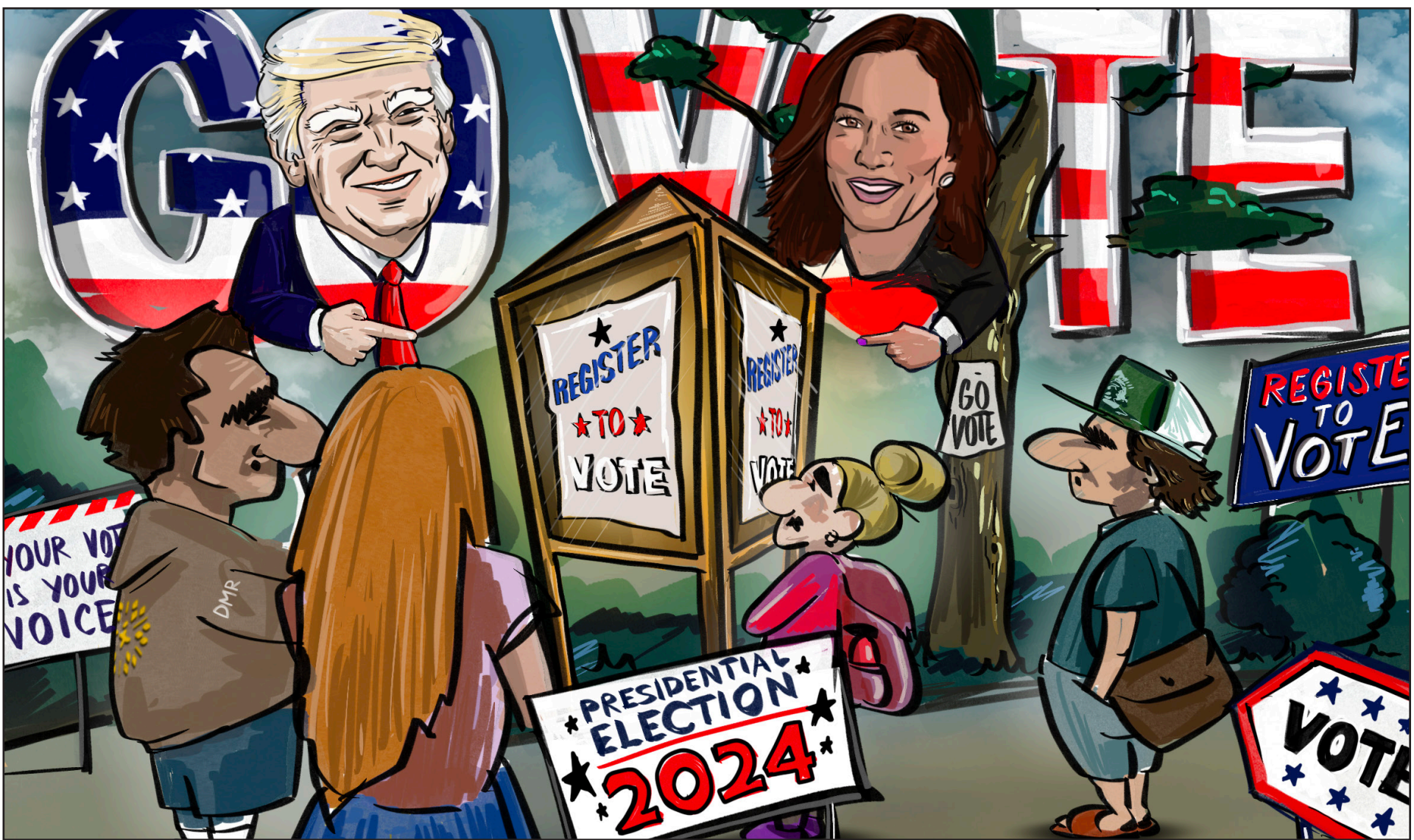
Staff and students alike are

hoping for a long-term fix in this trodden area of campus.

Student Royal Wood is looking forward to the lawn area being open again outside the library, saying how his walk would be a little easier and "It would also look nicer."

When asked if the delayed construction was delaying students on their way to classes, student Ian Edwards said it's not that big of a deal.

"I wouldn't say it's anything serious, maybe an extra minute, minute and a half or so but nothing that's really obstructive. I mean sure, you see it, but it's not anything detrimental to our day."



JOE VYVIAL

They won't keep me off the trail

I walk on the Castleton Rail Trail every day, with my noise-canceling headphones on and some kind of music or podcast blasting through them.

I'm so disconnected from the world around me that the only thing that snaps me back to reality is when a runner jogs by. Unable to hear them approach, I practically jump in the air as they pass by me.

As paradoxical as it sounds, I've mastered the art of being both completely oblivious and deeply paranoid.

Most of the time, I'm lost in my own world, but that undercurrent of paranoia is always there, like a quiet hum in the back of my mind. So, when I saw a man standing dead still behind me in the middle of the trail, dressed head-to-toe in black, my heart dropped.

For a split second, fear gripped me. But then, I brushed it off, because this unwarranted fear is something I feel frequently.

I picked up the pace a little, just to put my mind at ease. As I rounded a curve, I did a double take, turning back to check if he was still there. But when I looked over my shoulder, he was gone.

Just like that. No footsteps, no noise, nothing.

Vanished. Was he ever really there? Or was it just my mind playing tricks on me?

I've accepted that I get anxious for no reason. It's just who I am—a little paranoid, a little too quick to assume the worst. I'll often see someone far behind me and pick up my pace, even if they're not doing anything remotely threatening.

That day was no different. I called my mom, as I often do, so I could finish my walk in peace. It was no big deal, and I knew that.

The next day came, and I went to a meeting for The Castleton Spartan Newspaper. We were brainstorming topics for the next edition, and I pitched an article I'd been working on about my love for the Castleton Rail Trail.

I talked about how I felt the trail, and the forest in general, were misunderstood, especially in light of the tragedy that had happened there last year. I've always thought that fear of the trail was misplaced—I wasn't scared of it, not really.

After I finished my spiel, our advisor, David Blow, asked if I'd seen the email alert from Public Safety about a suspicious person reported on the trail that same night. I hadn't.

Curious, I opened the email. It read: "Public Safety received a report of a suspicious person on the Rail Trail. The only description provided was an individual dressed in all black clothing with a black cap."

It was the exact descrip-

tion of the man I'd seen. And, I wasn't the only one who had noticed him.

Other people had seen him too, and they had found him suspicious enough to report to Public Safety. I thought, maybe my paranoia didn't feel so irrational after all.

Even with that strange encounter, I still walk the trail every day. I still believe it's misunderstood and deserves more credit than it gets. The forest, with all its quiet beauty and wildness, doesn't deserve to be feared just because of one tragic event.

And yet, I still carry a sense of unease with me—a feeling that maybe paranoia is part of the human condition, a natural response to the unknown.

The man in black, the one who vanished from the trail without a sound, serves as a reminder of the thin line between fear and reality.

Sometimes, it's hard to know what to trust: our instincts, our paranoia, or the world around us.

But one thing's for sure; the trail, the forest, and even just the shadows deserve more than just our suspicion.

- Emily Ely



EMILY ELY

One of the many tranquil views from the Rail Trail that writer Emily Ely enjoys on her walks.

Check us out
online at
castletonspartan.com

CASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

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Page Designers Joe Vyvial Pearl Bellomo Maddie Lindgren Emily Ely Stone Stelzl	Advisor David Blow

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The successful quest for a dog

I wanted a dog. My sister wanted a dog. But how do we convince our parents to let us get a dog?

What is the best way to convince them we were responsible enough to take care of a dog? We had to come up with something that would work. Something that was smart and they would like.

Me and my sister, Lexi, got to work. We came up with different ways on how to ask them for a dog.

Asking them every couple of days to put the idea into their head.

Showing them pictures of dogs that were looking to be adopted.

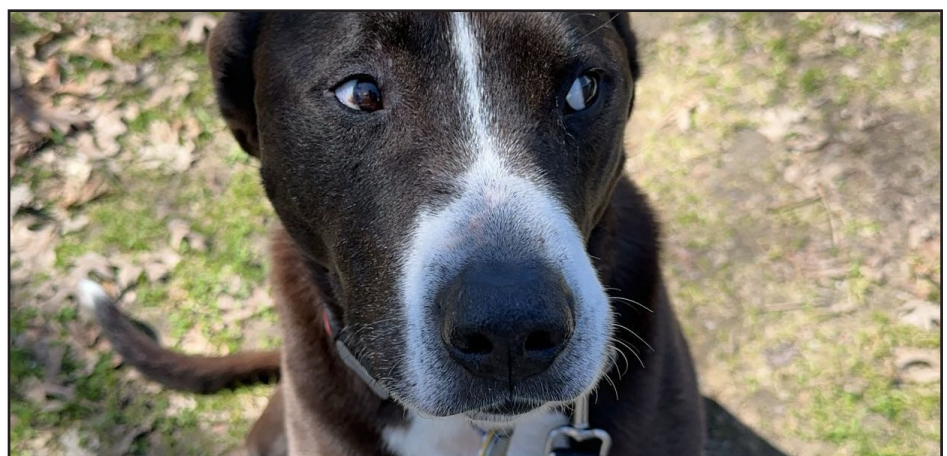
But we always got the same response; "We will think about it."

After a couple of months, we didn't really make any progress and still hadn't heard from our parents about whether or not we were getting a dog.

At this point, we figured it would most likely not happen. They probably thought we would have given up, but we hadn't yet. We just came up with a better way on how to ask them.

Christmas was about two months away and we were preparing to ask again. This time, we made a Power Point to ask. It has worked in the past for us, it has to work now. Right?

We prepared a slideshow. Added pictures. Added text.



HANNA KAISER

The Kaiser family pitbull, Luke, made the family complete. But it took some serious effort to get him.

Anything important that we thought would work.

Once it was done, we gathered our parents and presented it to them.

After every slide, we would look over at our parents to see if we had gotten a reaction out of them.

Present a slide, and look over.

Present a slide, and look over.

Present a slide, and look over.

It was just a continuous process of this as we continued to present.

Our slideshow consisted of multiple examples of facts to prove how responsible Lexi and I could be. We were trying to prove we could take care of the dog on our own. We included

ed pictures of all of the dogs that were looking to be adopted at our local humane society. We even included the dates for how long the dogs had been there waiting to be adopted. I like to think those helped.

However, after we presented our case on why we should get a dog, we got the usual "We will think about it."

After this, we just stopped asking. We figured we would've had a dog by now. It was the beginning of December. We gave the presentation over a month ago.

Then one day I got home from school. I followed my stepmom inside the house and heard her say "What did you get into today?"

I had no idea what she was talking about, but I did hear clicking in the house.

I walked inside and saw a white and brown dog walking toward me, his nails clicking on the hardwood floors.

"What is this?" Lexi asked in disbelief. We asked for a dog so many times, it seemed weird we had one.

"This is Luke," my stepmom said.

"Your Christmas present," my dad said at the same time.

We loved Luke right away. We were taking pictures of him and playing with him that whole night.

My family would feel different if we never added our loving pitbull to our family.

- Hannah Kaiser

Students interview renowned sportswriter



SAM LAMB

Tim Reynolds, an Associated Press sportswriter who has covered Super Bowls, World Series, NBA Finals and 12 Olympics, Zoomed into a Media Writing class for a lesson on reporting.

By Clarabel Redondo
Spartan Contributor

Behind every great news story is a brilliant writer with a passion for both storytelling and people.

Tim Reynolds, a sportswriter for the Associated Press, has made a name for himself by covering athletic events across the globe. From high school volleyball games in his little New York hometown to NBA Finals: you name it, he's written about it.

"Everyone has a story," he said. "It's a privilege to get to tell it."

Reynolds Zoomed into Communications professor David Blow's Media Writing class last Friday for an interview with the students. After 33 years of writing, he's sat down with numerous celebrities, covered 12 Olympics, and met 4 different presidents. With over 91,000 followers on the platform X, Reynolds's words are heard around the world.

But one of his most notable features for students was just how normal he is.

Etta Warren, a Media Writing student, said he was "super relatable" and that she "appreciated him being real."

Reynolds joined the meeting from a nondescript room in his

Florida house. He sat in front a mostly blank wall, wearing a blue button up with his dog – a 14-year-old shih tzu named Mikey – sleeping just off-camera. As he answered questions, he would often pause to think with an accompanying "uhhh," before jumping into his story with enthusiasm.

Despite his many achievements, Reynolds was incredibly humble. He confessed to still being super shy and often feeling unqualified or out of place.

When describing his brief, unplanned encounter with then-president Bill Clinton in Haiti after a devastating hurricane, he said his main thought in the moment was: "What the heck am I doing here?"

He also said he's still always nervous going into interviews. If you ever watch clips of him talking to big celebrities, he said, you can spot him often stroking the side of his face – a nervous tic he's never been able to drop.

"If you're not nervous, you're not really present," he said. "In a good way though, nerves are just energy. It's just energy and how you channel it."

Reynolds had a never-ending well of advice to share with the class, ranging from what

helped him grow as a journalist to why journalism should be appreciated.

One student asked him what events he typically covered at the Olympics, and he took the opportunity to share what he believed was the "coolest thing [he] ever covered": watching Kayla Harrison, a mixed martial artist and a former sexual assault survivor, win America's first gold medal in Women's Judo.

He described how she ran past the reporters yelling, "I'm not going to fucking cry! I'm not going to fucking cry!" before stepping onto the podium and immediately bursting into tears. The clear impact of Harrison's emotions on Reynolds shows just how deeply he cares about telling human stories, not just covering big sports news. He also said the story is a lesson to tell readers what they don't already know. They knew she won, but they didn't hear this interaction.

His biggest takeaway from the moment? "You never know when something awesome is going to happen."

Despite Reynolds having covered the same type of content for over thirty years, it's clear how much he still loves writing.

"He's so passionate about

his work," Media Writing student Kylie Bernier noted admiringly. Even (Professor) Blow, Reynolds's longtime friend, said, "I'm in awe of what he does."

Reynolds understands that the modern world is full of issues and things to worry about, but sports are a necessity because they offer a break from the stress.

"We're the escape hatch from real world problems," he said.

He says he hopes he can give people that escape and teach them something new while he's at it.

Reynolds also appreciates sports' ability to unite people. Based near Miami, he's seen firsthand how language barriers and cultural differences can be overcome by a local team victory.

"Thousands of people," he said, "brought together by the simultaneous love or hate for their sports team."

Reynolds' final message to the class was to pay attention to their studies and apply that knowledge in the real world.

"Every single job in the world is communicating," he said. "Journalism applies to every field, so use what you learn."

From Sox game to Devil's Bowl, CAB providing fun

By Jack Aicher
Spartan Contributor

The Castleton Campus Activities Board recently hosted a weekend of community building with a Devils Bowl stock car race on Saturday evening and a Sunday trip to Boston to watch the Red Sox face the White Sox.

The Campus Activities Board (CAB) kicked off the first three weeks of the Fall 2024 semester with club fairs, magicians, comedians, and even more social events to bring the student body together – with a highlight being a trip to Fenway Park.

Sunday morning, CAB members gathered participants at 7 a.m. to bus down to Boston. CAB prepared movies, music and snacks to accommodate the four-hour bus ride.

Once at Fenway, students enjoyed some of the food and took in the views of the city.

"It was my first time seeing baseball in America," said Riwa Kagari, an international student from Japan. She enjoyed the onion sausages and admired "the wave," in which the crowd stands and waves their arms in celebration.

There were lots of familiar VTSU students, Kagari said.

Alongside Kagari was her friend Kosuzu Otsuka. Otsuka described the bus ride back and admired being surrounded by all the excited people. Otsuka said that CAB kept students engaged with prizes, such as hats and game balls from Fenway.

It is events like these that continue to bring the VTSU community closer together.

Once every semester, CAB members attend an event-planning conference in hopes of attaining contracts with performers and productions. With the help of student surveys, CAB knows exactly what to look for in these events, said Aurelia Leerkes, the vice president of CAB.

The board uses the resources from the conference to generate their own new ideas for events.

"We're getting new ideas constantly," Leerkes said.

Leerkes talked about the upcoming events that students can look forward to, including scavenger hunts, open mic nights and community games.



Patrick McGurirk, above left, holds up his winning bingo card at the Super Bingo event. Host Phillip Malazarte, below right, calls out numbers.



DAKOTA CATALLA

Super bingo a super success

By Dakota Catella
Spartan Contributor

Complete silence was all you could hear except for host Hunter Day shouting bingo numbers.

"O, 69," Day yelled from the front of the pavilion.

Every VTSU Castleton student was itching to yell bingo.

Three in a row, almost four.

Junior Anneliese Bolewski then jumped out of her seat throwing up her hand winning the second blackout prize; the Nintendo Switch. Many people were hoping to trade prizes with her, but she was reluctant. Already having a Switch, she wanted to make the "best

trade" possible.

"Super Bingo is a classic part of the Castleton culture. I love seeing 19 to 28-year-olds go absolutely ham for bingo," Bolewski said with a laugh.

When speaking to her, it really seemed like she believed every student should get the chance to go at least once to try to feel that high of winning. She spoke about super bingo with a smile. It seemed she had a lot of fun and it seemed that winning gave her an extra pep in her step.

"I've accomplished bingo. I can move on with that chapter of my life," Patrick Mcguirk said with a smirk.

Mcguirk said he wasn't expecting to win, so was not pre-

pared to choose what he wanted. None of the prizes looked appealing to him, but he had to make his choice fast, so as to not be embarrassed by standing up there too long twiddling his thumbs.

The pressure led to him choose the object closest to him; the wearable blanket.

His thought process?

"Even if I don't wear it, it can double as an actual blanket," he said.

He too said he had a lot of fun. Getting the chance to hang out with friends was fun, though he said he's not a huge bingo fan.

Both Bolewski and Mcguirk said they enjoyed the host and the energy he brought to bingo

at the beginning of the night.

Bolewski said it must have been difficult for him to be a "replacement" for Perry Ragouzi, who was so beloved by the Castleton community, but she thought he did a wonderful job anyways.

"I was shocked with how many people were there. The fact we ran out of chairs meant people had to sit on the floor or other's laps. I was nervous," Day said.

Day thought it was fun to be able to interact with such a large audience, seeing over 200 people in attendance.

"There's a feeling you feel sorta like Santa Claus, giving out prizes. People were happy so I was," he said with a smile.

The obvious choice for him if he could have chosen a prize would have been the Switch or TV.

"But I'm a simple man and would have chosen the weighted blanket," Day said.

If he got the chance, he said he would in a heartbeat be the host for super bingo again since he loves seeing people and being involved.

When it was over, students reflected on the game.

"It wasn't about bingo, it was about hanging out with my best friends. It could've been a magic show or a comedian. I didn't go for bingo, I went for my friends," Mcguirk said.

Rutland Whoopie Pie Festival offers sweet smiles



A man with a whoopie pie hat was seen walking around Rutland's third annual Whoopie Pie Festival.

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

"I get 7 whoopie pies today for my 7th birthday," Chase Brown, a wide-eyed 7-year-old, declared with a grin smeared in chocolate. He didn't pause for long, turning back to his double-fisted dessert strategy, clearly savoring every moment of his special day.

Chase's chocolate-covered smile was a perfect reflection of the day's festivities at the Rutland Whoopie Pie Festival on Sept. 14. The downtown streets were filled with a sweet aroma as thousands of festival goers indulged in a vast array of whoopie pies, each more tempting than the last.

When Lori Gotshall, a first-time festival goer, was asked what she came for, she looked at this reporter and replied with a smile, "the whoopie pies."

This year's festival showcased 17 vendors, each offering their own unique twist on the

beloved treat. Attendees had the chance to sample flavors ranging from lemon poppy seed with blackberry filling to cinnamon roll and pumpkin with maple cream cheese.

The sheer variety had people lined up with bags full of the delicious desserts, eager to try as many different kinds as possible.

Among the first-time vendors was Morgan Levesque of Morgan's Whoopie Pies, who was thrilled with the warm reception.

"It's my first time here ... The overwhelming welcomeness of all the people that are here, just coming and saying hi and complimenting all of our whoopie pies—it's been overwhelmingly awesome," Levesque said, stammering with excitement.

Returning vendor Maggie's Munchies also had a lot to celebrate. It was their second year coming to the festival.

"It's our main business, and it's been very good and always busy," Maggie's husband explained, as taste testers swarmed around their table.

On the other side of the street, newcomers Cookie's Cupcakes were equally enthusiastic.

"We heard about it online and it's been a lot of fun. I'm having a great time," said Jon Bates, a friend of the owners.

After the votes were tallied, Cookies Cupcakes emerged as the star of the festival, winning both Best Overall and Most Creative awards. Their inventive flavors and perfect execution impressed the judges and delighted the crowd, making them the highlight of the day.

And who could forget the record-breaking whoopie pie baked by Dream Makers Bakers of Killington weighing a whopping 1,187 pounds!

As the festival wound down, Chase and the rest of the attendees left with full bellies and big smiles, already looking forward to next year's event. The Rutland Whoopie Pie Festival once again proved that a simple treat can bring a whole community together in a celebration of sweet, shared joy.

Talking invasive species

By Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

We have all been warned about climate change and environmental awareness, but we often neglect to think about the well-being of our own ecosystem in Vermont, said Lars Lund and Kristin Ross, experts in the wildlife and conservation field.

And invasive species are a bigger threat to our environment than most of us realize.

Lund, a protection forester for the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, gave a lecture via Zoom in the Jeffords Auditorium as part of a weekly series of science speakers. Lund discussed the dangers of invasive species in Vermont and the economic and environmental impacts of these invaders.

Lund described invasive species as “exotic species,” meaning, “all species of plants and animals not naturally occurring.” The VT Invasives site for environmental conservation, however, gives the direct meaning saying “plants, animals, and other organisms that are introduced to a non-native ecosystem and also cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health.”

The term invasive species has many connotations associated with it, as Lund pointed out. This is why most of us do not entirely grasp how much of an impact these organisms have, negatively or positively, on our ecosystem.

“The enemy is something we put there...We are the environmental stewards...and we need to act accordingly,” Lund said.

The more aware we are of our surroundings, the more capability we have to make a change, he added.

Ross, who teaches Environmental Science, talked about small steps we can take to help preserve our ecosystem. She described invasive species as being potentially threatening or nonthreatening, depending on the type and quantity.

Ross explained that ecosystems are changed by invasive species but if it’s a negative or positive depends on the species and the species density. For instance, the spotted lantern fly, a deadly invasive species, kills native plants and puts apple orchards in danger which impacts our environment in a negative way.

Ross pointed out that some invasive species are necessary in reasonable, sustainable quantities.

“We rely on so many different species,” she added, describing how white-tailed deer survive solely on certain invasive plants and organisms.

She pointed out that there are ways to help protect the ecosystem and the environment as a whole. She said buying locally, “eating lower on the food chain”, and connecting with professional organizations and societies that deal with the conservation of our ecosystem has a positive impact.

Ross explained that it is important to care for our environment as it correlates to humans.

“Healthy ecosystems are tied to human health,” she said, adding we should be vigilant about introducing potentially harmful foreign soil and other organisms into our ecosystem as it could harm humans and the environment alike.

Ross warned of our contribution to our environment and humankind, claiming that we will “pay the consequences,” should we neglect to protect our ecosystem.

“Healthy ecosystems help regulate the climate,” she said.

VTSU student, Gavin Bradley, a wildlife and animal enthusiast, weighed in through an email response saying “It’s extremely important for overall biodiversity health and ecosystem health.”

He explained that managing invasive species is how we manage our personal health as well as the health of our wildlife and environment.

“Many times, invasive species bring with them micro-organisms that are not native, which can flip an ecosystem upside down if not studied and managed properly,” Bradley explained.

New hip and back on the road



Pat Brougham, above, runs a 10km race seven months after hip surgery. Brougham’s participation medal, above right.

Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

When VTSU Castleton Criminal Justice Professor Pat Brougham realized she needed a hip replacement in February, she thought she may never run again.

That’s why completing Disneyland’s Halloween Half-Marathon with on Sept. 8 with a 16-minute mile average was no small feat.

“It was an accomplishment after the surgery. It’s a big difference from the amount of pain I was in and hardly being able to walk and then to have that surgery. It’s like night and day,” Brougham said.

Her experience running began in the military but came to a halt for several years due to knee problems. In 2012, she began recreationally running and has participated in fun runs ever since, naming the Tinkerbell 10k in 2014 and her first half-marathon in Killington in 2015 as examples.

“It’s good for your mental well-being, to exercise...Running is also a place that’s a bit meditative, especially a long run. You get into this sort of zone,” she said.

Arthritis, cartilage damage and impact over-time led to Brougham’s need for surgery, but doctors initially told her she was too young for the operation.

If she needed another down the road, it would have been traumatic for the body. Then, she was referred to Dartmouth, where their methods and tech-

nology meant she could have the operation.

“The technology now is great,” she said. “I was off work for about three weeks... And by three months, I was allowed to run.”

The month leading up to the half-marathon, she trained twice a week – one short run, three to four miles, and one long run, eight to 10 miles. She also uses the interval method, a mixture of walking and running, to keep impact low.

She ran the Halloween Half-Marathon with fellow runner and best friend, Clarriss Palmer, where temperatures approached 100 degrees with high humidity.

“We sat in the medical tent after the run for a while, packed with ice to bring our temperatures down,” she said, adding that the heat likely increased her overall time by about 10 minutes.

She was shocked to find out about a 33-year-old man who died shortly after crossing the finish line from the event’s Facebook group chat.

“It just kind of hit us all, because we were all suffering from the heat...but to then think this person, who’s like 35 years old, really fit. He was young and in shape, and he had posted the day before [on TikTok].”

See “Marathon” on page 6



COURTESY PHOTOS

Cannabis program featured in ‘Seven Days’

Rosa Kehoe
Castleton Spartan

Six years ago, VTSU Castleton Sociology and Anthropology Professor Phillip Lamy and colleagues established the Cannabis Studies Certificate Program (CSCP), which has recently gained recognition in the Seven Days newspaper.

The article goes into great detail about how far this program has come, what students are getting out of it, and how it has helped so many people.

“We saw a great deal of misinformation circulating in the media, often coming from politicians, medical professionals, law enforcement, and the public. We decided as academics, researchers, and consumers, we needed to participate in the public debate,” said Lamy.

Lamy and faculty voiced their convictions via letters to the editor, opinion pieces, public forums, and a Cannabis, Culture, and Consciousness course co-taught by himself and Philosophy professor Brendan Lalor in 2016. Two years later, the program was conceived and launched a year after that.

Lamy was ecstatic about hearing how his program that he helped create had been featured in the Seven Days.

“I met the reporter Ken Picard at a NECANN (New England Cannabis Conventions) conference and exposition in Burlington last Year. He followed up with the interview and article,” Lamy said.

Picard did a grand job portraying everything that goes on in the Cannabis program, including multiple students in the program, where they are now, the program itself, and internships. Lamy went on to explain more about the program and internship.

“Any student (traditional or non-traditional, full time



Professors Phil Lamy and Brendan Lalor in Lamy’s Castleton backyard.

or part-time, even high school students) can take the classes. For those who enroll in the certificate program, there are main classes. After completing the three classes, students then enroll in an internship. All courses are three credits; thus the CSCP is 12 credits in full,” said Lamy.

Lamy explained that the internship requires 144 hours and other assignments including a journal, final presentation, and self-evaluation. He shared that “they have placed students in more than 20 different internship companies and organizations, including cannabis farms, or cultivation facilities, and dispensaries.”

Lamy gave a shoutout to several students who excelled after completing their internship including Jake Mead, Madison Martin, Chandler Volk, and Sarah Wallis, all of whom work at cannabis distributors in the Rutland region.

Sarah Wallis, one of the students that graduated the program, was ecstatic that Seven Days was doing an article on them.

“I was super excited! I was

asked for an interview but unfortunately, I was in the ICU when I received it,” said Wallis.

Unfortunately, Wallis has to put a stop in her business plan right now because of unforeseeable accidents, but she is still excited to continue them when she can. Wallis learned about CSCP when she was studying at Castleton for her Psychology degree.

“I am super interested in alternative therapies and cannabis has been such a huge part of my own personal recovery. I have used cannabis in many ways-particularly for pain management as well as a way to connect and improve my mental health,” Wallis added.

Wallis completed the program along with her bachelor’s in psychology in 2022, from there she has been working on her end goal, which is “to help those struggling with substance use disorder or other mental health issues by using psychedelic therapies,” she said. Wallis goes on to talk about how “it offers a higher payoff in many ways! I am currently awaiting a position at the first dispensary up in Killing-



JON OLENDER PHILIP

ton! This opportunity came to me through this course - from another person who also completed the program!”

Chris Van Den Meiracker is another student in the CSCP and interviewed for the Seven Days.

“I had a range of reactions when I learned about the article in Seven Days. Mostly happy and proud, but I am also glad the program is getting this spotlight,” Meiracker said.

He added, “I hope it inspires anyone who might be on the same path I was on a little over a year ago. I also hope it lends more legitimacy to the program. Some may scoff at the idea of a Vermont college running a Cannabis Studies Program, but everyone I’ve encountered in the program is as serious, hardworking, and driven as anyone I’ve met in any industry.”

Meiracker said he hopes this article attracts more people to the program, and ultimately, the cannabis industry.

He first heard about the program in the summer of 2023, where he was working for Ceres Collaborative in Burlington, but knew it

wasn’t his ideal job. Still wanting to advance his career in the field, he began searching for schools and came across Castleton/VERSUS Cannabis Studies Program.

“I started in August of 2023 with the classroom component, which finished back in May and since July I’ve been working on completing the internship position. I am on track to be finished with my two internships by the middle of October,” he said.

He believes “this program is more than just a resume builder. For anyone serious about making their way in the cannabis industry here in Vermont or elsewhere, I cannot recommend this program enough. Over the last year I have learned more about cannabis and the industry than I could have done on my own.”

The program is evidently glowing with positive reviews from students who have had successful careers in the industry.

The eyes never lie

By Joe Vyvial
Castleton Spartan

Nothing stands out on someone's body like their beautiful eyes. Pretty eyes are hard to ignore because it is human nature to see beautiful things.

About seven years ago, my first week of high school, I sat next to this girl in one of my classes. She had the most beautiful eyes. I noticed that right away.

I doodle all sorts of eyes in my sketchbook all the time. It's what I draw, when I don't know what to draw. I drew hers and she loved it. Since then, I've done it couple more times

and we became good friends. This is the one I did most recently.

There's a thing about eye paintings. It captures not just the physicality of the eye, but also the emotions it can convey. Joy, fear, anger, confusion, curiosity and so much more. It is a gateway to the soul in a way. You can tell a lot about a person based on a look into their eyes.

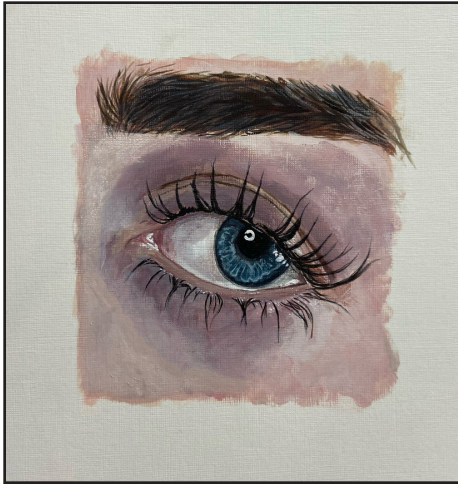
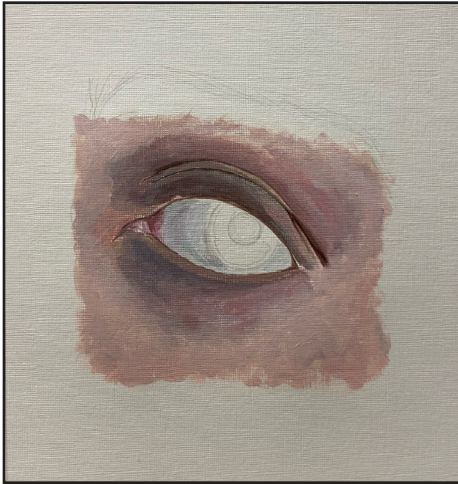
I loved this quote from the Scarface movie that goes "The eyes, Chico, they never lie."

It means that the eyes can reveal the truth of a person's feelings. Even when their words or body language suggest otherwise. When looking

at a painting, the eyes make you wonder. It draws you in, it has a mystery behind it, and that is what I love about it.

I love the complexity of them, the detail. There is so much to pay intention to, within a small area. You have the skin texture, the eyelashes and their shadows, the iris which contains so much detail, the pupil too.

My favorite thing when painting eyes though, and I always save it for the end, is the little reflection in the eye, the white light in the iris. It is a final touch, that I think, makes an ordinary painting come to life.



JOE VYVIAL

Artist Joe Vyvial captures the complexities of the eye using acrylic.

"Five Women Wearing the Same Dress"

First play of the semester delivers drama, laughter, and unresolved tension

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

The recent rendition of "Five Women Wearing the Same Dress" by student performers from VTSU Castleton combined dramatic moments, comedy, and moments of wonder on stage.

The play, created by Alan Ball, is about five bridesmaids, each with their troubles, secrets, and desires, who hide out during a wedding reception. They bond during the evening over their dislike for the bride and the difficulties of being a woman.

The show left some of its more serious themes unresolved, though, even though the cast was able to inject humor and depth into the performance.

Speaking about her overall experience in the production, Carissa Challinor, who had a noteworthy performance, said, "My experience with the play was overall amazing."

"There were some low moments where one of us didn't have our lines memorized or just stressed from being a part of various activities, but in the end, it all worked out," she said.

The comedic timing was one aspect that played a huge role in the show, Challinor said.

"I would say most of the scenes we did were comedic. I don't think there was any moment where we truly broke character though. The one that comes to mind is when Frances tells my character and Ella that she wants Billy's little brother. We would always crack up and smile," she said.

The audience erupted in laughter during moments like these. It showed the cast's connection and ability for humor delivery.

On the flip side, at times the play took on heavier topics such as AIDS and the sexual abuse of a minor, issues that felt underexplored by the time the curtain had fallen.

While these themes were introduced with weight and importance, it seemed as though the production didn't circle back to them, leaving certain plot points unresolved. This created a sense of confusion for the audience, as the balance between comedy and serious

moments didn't always blend seamlessly.

Challinor touched on how she thinks the play's themes remain relevant today.

"I think the play connects to today by showing the struggles of women. I mean we talked about problems that are still going on today, such as sexual abuse. We also talked about how marriage is still a part of a woman's identity, and some people today believe it is a woman's only job," she said.

Emma Patrissi, a junior, was in the audience last Friday night and commented on the portrayal of these heavy topics.

"The play covered many difficult topics that many people face in this world that may be afraid to admit or tell others about. I think it was able to make a lot of people in this community feel less alone," Patrissi said.

However, some audience members had a different outlook. Freshman Sofia Lund said she appreciated how some of these subjects were touched on.

"I thought they handled most of the topics covered well. I don't know if the child molesting was handled well because a lot of the characters had unhelpful emotional reactions that caused the character to feel unsafe. However, I appreciated how the character Mindy normalized being gay and showed how lesbians don't have one shape or size," Lund said.

Montgomery Crane, another key cast member, reflected on the emotional depth the show aimed to capture

"With each woman in the show, they all are longing for a form of connection in their lives and a sense of belonging within their group. This is a real feeling that most people, myself included, have felt at one time in their lives," Crane said.

One of the highlights for both the audience and cast was the intimacy of working with a small group.

"Working with a small cast was so fun. I worked with a small cast before when I was in No Exit last year, so it was fun to experience it again," Challinor shared.

The performers' true feeling of friendship boosted the performance, as they rebounded

off each other's energy on stage, demonstrating their close-knit dynamic.

"Having a smaller cast definitely makes shows like this feel more intimate and connected to me personally. You

can focus on the relationships with the characters and have fun creating new and interesting moments between each one when you have that stronger connection to your castmates," Crane said.

Even though "Five Women Wearing the Same Dress" dealt with some heavier subjects and left some unanswered questions, it was also full of touching and funny moments.

Despite the desire for a

greater understanding of the play's pressing issues, the audience enjoyed the performance due to the cast's camaraderie and distinctive talents.



MARTIN VAN BUREN III

"Five Women Wearing the Same Dress" took the stage Sept. 19-22.

Big turnout means big plans for Pottery Club

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Tucked in the corner of the Club Fair on Sept. 5, the Pottery Club had no idea what was coming.

Typically, a new club might hope for a few interested students. But what President Kiara Nestler and Vice President and Zoe Ukasick went home with was something out of the ordinary.

"I was expecting like, 10 to 20 people, I wasn't really thinking fifty-two," Nestler said.

The first-time club leader's original plan for the pottery club was to meet in the Wooldridge building behind the Fine Arts Center once or twice a week with however many people signed up. Then that number would be able to afford the club a couple pottery wheels.

Assuming that number would be less than 30. "But, with 52 people, I'm going to

have to probably make groups that I take in once or twice a week and do certain things with. I might do it based off of experience. But, I have to figure out a lot of the funding stuff first," Nestler said.

The Wooldridge building is known for being quiet and lowkey. A place for art students to work in peace.

"I feel like utilizing that area on campus, that's huge. You know, try to use everywhere. I'm sure like half the campus doesn't even know that place exists," said Hunter Day, a history major.

Some students are using the club to return to the arts after a long absence.

"In high school I took a ceramics class, which included a lot of work with pottery and arts of that area. So, when I saw that there was a pottery club, I was like 'oh that looks really cool,'" said student Bethany Davis.

The club allows students from all walks of life to feel

free to express their artistic sides. Especially because they might not get the opportunity to within their major.

"I signed up because it sounded like a really interesting idea, and I feel like there's not a lot of clubs that allow you to express a creative, artistic self on the campus," Day said.

The Pottery Club will be allowing a vast group of students to explore their creativity in a welcoming environment.

"I'm really excited just overall, getting to meet other artistic-minded individuals because I feel like those are the type of people that are kind of kept away and kept to themselves, and giving them an outlet and a social setting is really, really important for the campus," Day said. "So, I'm excited to see other people flourish with their creations."



KIARA NESTLER

Pottery Club President Kiara Nestler created this octopus.

New ghost shark species found in Australia

By Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

I don't know about you, but sometimes I feel like our species overlooks the world in so many ways. Do you know what I mean? Think about it: have you ever had a thought drift across your mind that made you think about your own perception of reality? Have you ever thought that you might have walked somewhere new that the world has never seen before? The truth is, there is so much out there in the big world that we humans do not know about. There are so many great discoveries waiting to be made in any field.

One recent example of a new discovery is the Australian Narrow-nosed Spookfish, A.K.A. (*Harriotta avia*). This species of ghost shark was found in an area of the ocean floor off the east coast of New Zealand, known as the Chatham Rise. This species of ghost shark was discovered by researchers from New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA). Before this discovery was made by scientists, the spookfish was actually considered part of a globally distributed species. However, there was crucial information hiding in the shark's DNA. The DNA housed genetic and morpho-



COURTESY GAVIN BRADLEY

logical differences that separated this shark species from the rest.

DNA was collected from the Australian Narrow-nosed Spookfish and was found to be closely related to sharks and rays. This species of shark be-

longs to a group known as the Chondrichthyes. This class's main synapomorphy, or feature, is that fish in this class possess cartilaginous skeletons. In addition, the Australian Narrow-nosed Spookfish is part of the Chimaeriformes

group, which includes Ratfish, Rabbitfish, Ghostsharks, and Spookfish.

CNN gives more information on what NIWA had to say about their discovery, as they state: "Harriotta avia is unique due to its elongated, narrow and

depressed snout; long, slender trunk; large eyes; and very long, broad pectoral fins. It is a lovely chocolate brown color," said Brit Finucci, a fisheries scientist at NIWA, in the statement. Brit Finucci of NIWA also states, "Ghost sharks like

this one are largely confined to the ocean floor, living in depths of up to 2,600m (8,530 feet). Their habitat makes them hard to study and monitor, meaning we don't know a lot about their biology or threat status, but it makes discoveries like this even more exciting."

CNN gives more information on Brit Finucci of NIWA, saying, "We don't actually know a lot about ghost sharks." Finucci told CNN at the time. "What we do know mostly comes from adult specimens. So it's very rare and very uncommon to find juveniles of a lot of these species, so that's why I got quite excited."

I believe one important thing to realize is that we build our own perceptions of the world around us. We humans are the creators of our world; we all live on the same planet but inhabit different worlds of perspective. Though this is true, the fact that the natural world doesn't care about our perspectives is true as well. The opportunity for discovery is always going to be there, and so is the race for discovery. However, I believe that if you run the race of discovery with the sneakers of curiosity and respect for your surroundings, your chances of reaching the finish line of accomplishment in any field significantly increase.

Dogs bring a pawsitive energy to Castleton



ROBIN CHAMBERLAIN

Certified therapy dog, Bella, put a smile on Galo Scaramastra's face during a Thursday's therapy dog session.

By Robin Chamberlain
Spartan contributor

"WOOOOOF" says Augi, a newly certified therapy dog, excited to see so many people eager to pet him.

It was Thursday, where between 12:30-1:30 p.m., the Calvin Coolidge Library invites dog lovers from VTSU Castleton to pet and cuddle a few dogs.

Students say they go to Therapy Dog Thursdays and often start sharing about their pets at home and reminiscing.

"As a small child, sometimes all we want is a hug right?... You can come hug a dog and not have any judgment," said Dunkin Snitkin, a counselor at the Wellness center who helps run the program.

Many people see the social and emotional benefits of therapy dogs as well.

"During the fall semester, so many people are new and are missing their families and their dogs, so it feels like home," Snitkin said.

These therapy dogs don't just sit there and look cute, although they do that too. They fulfill the emotional needs of people around them.

"It really does bring a joy to people. They actually do smile...their whole face lights up," said Angela Kenny, the handler of one of the dogs named Ollie.

Students of Castleton had lots to say about the dogs – but more so to the dogs.

Sadie Steckler used a baby

voice to talk to Augi saying, "You being a good boy?"

When walking into the library when the therapy dogs are around, there is laughter in the air. People have beaming smiles on their faces as they pet the dogs.

"I don't usually like small dogs, but I love this one," said freshman Galo Scaramastra.

He was speaking of a fluffy white dog named Bella, who has been working as a therapy dog long enough to have a degree.

Dogs are able to get certified at 1 year of age through a basic obedience test that makes sure they can be pet anywhere, are gentle, and non-reactive, Kenny said.

The company to thank for the event is the Caring Canines, which has over 30 trained therapy dogs.

The Caring Canines started in 2002 as a club in Southern Vermont. Their dogs visit hospitals, schools and senior centers, bringing smiles to people of all ages. Therapy dogs provide other benefits as well, promoting decrease in blood pressure, decrease in stress and an increase in spirits, according to the company website.

Snitkin spoke about the environment of a therapy dog get together.

"Nobody knows anyone, but they all get along and open up space for one another. It's quite beautiful," he said.

Marathon:



COURTESY PHOTO

Professor Pat Brougham celebrates after finishing the half-marathon run in California.

Despite the incident, Brougham and Palmer plan on continuing the Disney runs, the next one set for Nov. 3 in Disneyworld, located in Florida. They're excited to receive the "Coast to Coast" medal, which recognizes individuals who run at both locations within one calendar year.

She said she's received a lot of support on her Facebook and from the Castleton community, even naming Athletic Training professor Sarah Cook as a frequent running partner.

"I'm not at all surprised that Professor Brougham was able to do this so soon after her hip replacement—that's just the kind of dedication and determination I've seen from her. It's been amazing to follow her journey this past year, and to see her take on a marathon after all her hard work," commented Communications professor and friend Sam Davis-Boyd.

SSA's Mac and cheese event



AVERY BOUCHARD

Students enjoy homemade Mac and cheese at the Woodruff Hall organized by the Student Success Advisors.

Men’s soccer hits rough patch

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The Men’s Spartans soccer team kicked off their first Little East conference game against Rhode Island College (RIC), but sadly came up short falling 3-2. Rhode Island College started strong scoring in the fourth minute of the game and continued the lead with another goal in the 17th minute.

Toby Ritzkowski, responded quickly in the 26th minute of the game, cutting the deficit to one just before the half. After taking the half to readjust, both teams started strong in the second half.

RIC got their third goal of the match in the 56th minute to extend their lead by two. The Spartans reacted once more by Jacques Alfari late in the game, but it wasn’t enough to come back and win it all. The Spartans recorded their first LEC loss of the year.

Following their tough loss to Rhode Island College, the

Spartans were prepared to take on Norwich University at our home turf, Dave Wolk Stadium. VTSU Castleton was prepared to alter their methods.

They grasped control of the game and had the ball early on, creating opportunities in Norwich’s half, but they were unable to translate those opportunities into goals. The Spartans fought despite Norwich’s goal in the game’s 32nd minute.

The rest of the game was very even on both sides with good opportunities for both teams. Tanner Curtis and Nate Lurie hit hard efforts that just slightly went over the crossbar.

Junior, Tanner Curtis expressed his thoughts on how this game went south for the team. “It was a tough fought game; we weren’t clinical enough in front of the net to even the score line. The score line doesn’t reflect on how we have been playing, and the team feels prepared moving into the thick of the season. They ended the game 1-0 with another loss.

VTSU Castleton faced their second Little East conference game this Saturday at Western Connecticut University. With lots of grit and tenacity the boys came out to put the wolves to rest but was not accomplished.

WestConn came out aggressive to start which surprised the Spartan men, 5 minutes into the game the Wolves got a penalty kick to start their goal scoring streak. Putting it in the left side of the net, just past goalkeeper Xander Berthiaume, the Spartans were forced to chase the ball for the majority of the game as WestConn continued to play swiftly around them. Westconn scored with a header off a corner kick to seal the 2-0 halftime lead.

After intercepting a VTSU pass at the 10-yard line and sending it to the upper corner of the net, Westconn took the opportunity to score once again. The Wolves scored a fourth goal, sending the Spartans scrambling. Westconn received their second penalty

kick of the game and buried it in the goal.

Sophomore Will Ambruso has commented on the penalty kicks stating, “We had a couple unlucky calls by the ref that resulted in penalties that they capitalized on. The Spartans were able to put a long-grounded ball into the net by Stanly Anderson, but it was enough to make an impact, there for the Spartans lost 5-1. In the end, this hard-working team is not defined by this loss, “The team worked hard, and it wasn’t our day.” said Will Ambruso.

Overall, the Spartans won’t let these last couple defeats stand in their way of accomplishing their goals this 2024 season. “We are ready to bounce back and make a statement in the LEC”, Tanner Curtis states. We are hopeful that the Spartans can make a comeback from these losses and turn it into a learning opportunity to better themselves.



PHOTO FROM CASTLETONSPORTS
Seth Dube is locked in ready to recieve a pass.



Eva Hofmeiseter (left) and Ginny Trevisan (right) both in action with one of their two sports.



PHOTOS FROM CASTLETONSPORTS

Experts guide to being a dual-sport athlete

By Madelyn Nonni
Spartan Contributor

It was like clockwork. A tennis ball hits the racket, the concrete court, the other racket, and the concrete again. It was all you could hear, serene almost.

Serene that is, if you ignore the wind picking up, trees rustling, a loud truck passing by, music playing from the speaker, shoes scuffing the court, the ball hitting the net, or the occasional swearing coming from the opposite end of the court.

Pop, pop, pop. The ball is hit out.

The determination is there for one junior, Ginny Trevisan. On the court, she is 3rd singles and 2nd doubles for the Castleton Women’s Tennis Team. She is also on the Women’s Alpine Ski Team, where she races 2nd in Slalom and 3rd in Giant Slalom.

As busy as she is in her athletics, Trevisan is also an incredibly busy student as a molecular biology and bio-medicine major, minoring in chemistry and premedical.

“I use Google Calendar to plan out my days and my weeks, because if I don’t then I’ll forget everything if I

don’t,” said Trevisan.

Trevisan competes in her sports during the fall and winter seasons. She estimates that she dedicates around 15 hours a week to her sports, keeping her busy from August until mid-March.

“Fun? I give up fun. I don’t get a lot of social life outside of sports. That’s my social life,” Trevisan said.

With her busy sports season and loaded course schedule, Trevisan said that she still sleeps a lot every night, as it helps her to keep up with the physical and mental demands of being a dual-sport student-athlete.

Pop, pop, pop. The serve is in.

Eva Hofmeister similarly said that she does her best to get eight hours of sleep per night and intake enough food to be more overall balanced in her academics and sports.

Hofmeister is a sophomore on Women’s Ice Hockey and Women’s Lacrosse at Castleton, and majors in Biology.

“Sometimes the balance between the ice and turf can be tough on the body, but I push through it,” she said. “I do utilize my professors and the Academic Support Center for anything that I am struggling



PHOTOS FROM CASTLETONSPORTS
Wayne Alexander in action during a cross country meet.

with or need extra time.”

Hofmeister attributes good relationships with each of her coaches and working closely with them to keep herself healthy. She mentions a similar relationship with her professors.

“Keeping your professors in

the loop of things is very helpful and they can support you in any way possible,” Hofmeister said.

In terms of managing both sports and academics, Hofmeister explains that going to boarding school before college, where she played both

sports, made it not much of a transition to college but instead was about finding a proper balance.

“I try to balance everything from athletics to academics to my social life. I make sure that each of the categories gets their equal share of attention,” said Hofmeister

Hofmeister says being a two-sport athlete helps her improve her time management, and truly make the most of what it means to be a part of two sports programs at once.

Pop, pop, pop. The serve is returned but lands out.

While some student-athletes find it necessary to have outlets aside from their sports, graduate student Wayne Alexander has a slightly different view.

“I find that my sport is actually a great outlet for stressors that might come from school, work, or just life in general. I know that even if I’ve had a long day, I can go to practice and leave that stuff at the door, and just focus on training for a couple hours,” he said.

Alexander competes for Men’s Cross Country and Indoor and Outdoor Track at Castleton, majoring in exercise science and minoring in nutrition.

“You really have to love

your sport. You won’t get much of a break during the school year, so if you don’t love what you’re doing, it’ll be pretty easy to burn out,” said Alexander.

Alexander explains that he trains up to 25 hours a week in the fall season and during winter or spring track, it’s even more hours.

“I give up a lot of my weekends. Throughout the year, all of my cross country and track meets are always on Saturdays, so having a Saturday off is somewhat rare,” said Alexander.

Pop, pop, pop.

Castleton’s dual-sport athletes understand that balance is necessary to maintain their personal and academic life.

“It also helps a lot if you are close with your teammates since they will be the people you spend a majority of your time with,” Alexander said.

“Remember that you and your mental health is important too,” Trevisan warned.

“I have always wanted to be a college athlete and when I found out I could have the opportunity, I took it. I am glad that I am one and don’t regret the decision,” Hofmeister added.

Let Tua decide his own football fate

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

On Sept. 12, the NFL world witnessed a horrible but familiar scene when Tua Tagovailoa, the Miami Dolphins quarterback, laid on the field after suffering another concussion.

This marks his third diagnosed concussion since entering the league in 2020. With all the rule changes on how to protect players and the NFL implementing more and more player safety regulations, Tagovailoa has found himself on the wrong end of all of these precautions.

His name headlined sports news throughout Thursday night of Sept. 12 into the next morning. Players, coaches, sports broadcasters and other

athletes spoke on the tragic event that occurred.

Respected former players like Andrew Witworth, Tony Gonzalez, and Dez Bryant chimed in on the matter expressing their concern and advising him that maybe it’s time for him to call it a career.

Unfortunately, there hasn’t been a ton of people or news coming out in favor of Tagovailoa continuing his career. I’m sure he has the support of his family, teammates and coaches, but there haven’t been many statements encouraging his stated decision to continue playing.

The ironic piece to this story is the other player involved in the hit that caused his latest concussion was Damar Hamlin. Hamlin notably suffered cardiac arrest after he was hit

in the chest in a game against the Cincinnati Bengals in 2022. That hit shook the consciousness of the league because it was an incident they’d never seen before.

I could only imagine the thoughts and emotions Hamlin experienced once he realized the severity of Tagovailoa’s injury. Hamlin tweeted this early Friday morning following the Bills’ 31-10 victory: “My love and prayers with Tua fasho, sending you strength and healing for a speedy recovery.”

There have been so many different factors that have gone into this situation, but from an organizational standpoint, the Dolphins are in bind. Tagovailoa just signed a lofty contract extension two months ago that has made him the richest player to ever wear a Dolphins

uniform. It’s a four-year deal worth \$212.4 million. The Dolphins were hesitant to extend his contract due to his injury history but decided to pull the plug and make one of the highest paid players in the league.

So, now the question is, what happens to the deal if he does decide to retire?

The deal ties him to the Dolphins through 2028 but the structure of the contract technically only marries the Dolphins to him through 2025. If he retires this season, he’ll receive an additional \$54 million of the contract that’s fully guaranteed through 2025.

The contract does include \$167.2 million guaranteed, but the “guarantees” are conditional because if Tagovailoa is never medically cleared, he can walk away with that en-

tire package. So, the Dolphins would owe Tua \$167.2 million of the entire four-year extension. But if he is cleared from the NFL’s concussion protocol and decides to retire, he’d be voluntarily walking away. He has already received \$93.17 million guaranteed at signing. But if he’s gonna walk away voluntarily, then the 2025 guarantees will void.

Retirement voids guarantees but the Dolphins could honor the guarantee if they chose to. Tagovailoa’s \$42 million signing bonus is also at risk because when you retire, the remaining portion of the bonus can be redeemed. If he were to voluntarily retire he’d be walking away from about \$120 million.

Honestly, I don’t think people should be giving Tua their

opinion on what he should and shouldn’t do. Whether these people are his parents, wife, sibling, teammate, or coach I don’t think it’s best for people to influence him into doing what they believe is right. I believe those closest to him should simply just support him. I don’t think it’s the best course of action for them to influence his decision.

It should be the neurologists’ and his decision because anything that you may say or do to influence him, you may regret later on. The bottom line is for people to simply care about Tua Tagovailoa the individual and not necessarily about his future or what they feel is right.

Field hockey team finding their rhythm

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

Coach Emily Douglas and the Castleton field hockey team are pleased with their start to the 2024 season. More than a quarter into the season, they’ve appreciated both the highs and lows thus far.

Douglas is confident in this group compared to teams in the past because of their resilience and determination.

“I feel like in the past, the teams I’ve coached here have come out really strong looking to dominate and as soon as any hardships strikes, like for example when our opponent scores, we’ve always head dropped,” Douglas said. “But this year it’s been a whole different team that we’re coaching so we’ve allowed other teams to come out stronger than us and as soon as they score on us it’s like alright now it’s time to turn it on.”

Although Douglas is encouraged with this approach, she also recognizes that this isn’t sustainable if they want to reach their ultimate goal.

“Now, I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, but there’s going to come to a point where we can’t afford to do that, so we’ve been really focusing on correcting that because it’s

something we’ve never experienced before,” Douglas said. “I just don’t want to continue to get to a point where we let our opponent control the pace of the game. Luckily, we’re coming out on top but I want to be more consistent with our starts.”

The team has shown resilience through the culture they’ve created. Graduate assistant coach Alexis Ruiz realized connectivity within the team the moment she got here. Ruiz has really gotten a chance to become well acquainted with girls and has enjoyed watching them grow.

“I came from a team that didn’t have a great culture so coming here and seeing the girls compete every day ,despite how we played or how practice went, shows how the players have developed a great culture” Ruiz said. “No one is being rude to teammates or disrespecting coaches, and I love how all of the girls are really approachable but watching them continue to grow has been my favorite thing.”

Senior captain Haley Lassen is a testament to the great culture. Lassen is a senior and understands this is her last shot to make an impact for her and her teammates. Lassen is valuing every moment and cherishing all the connections

she’s made and will continue to make.

“We’ve worked so hard on building our culture and our ability to be coached has been good, so I try to step out of the locker room with gratitude for every practice and every game with the mindset to compete,” Lassen said. “I’m most appreciative of my teammates and the connections we have both on and off the field. These are the people I wanna maintain relationships with in the future.”

Lassen is finding a balance between having fun and enjoying her final year but also recognizing when she needs to focus. As a leader Lassen understands the importance of mentally knowing when things are meant to be enjoyable and when it’s time to be the anchor for the team.

Early on, the team has developed both strengths and weaknesses, Douglas recognized. Because of the team’s good start Douglas isn’t hitting the panic button but she understands where the team can build from.

“This year it doesn’t matter who’s on the field, everybody’s playing together, every goal is scored by a different person,” Douglas said. “This makes it hard for defenses to defend us because everyone’s a threat to score of-

fensively. In the past we’ve had strong offensive players who’ve dominated scoring but now it’s exciting to see numerous players make an impact.”

“Although offense has been a strength we do need to do a better job of finishing plays,” Douglas said.

Douglas also feels that she needs to do a better job of maintaining poise throughout the game. She understands that her energy and emotions are infectious so it’s important for her to stay even keeled.

As for standout players so far this season, Douglas mentioned a handful.

“Jess Smithson has been good. I feel confident in her abilities this season with her speed and ability to recover. Peyton Richardson has been another standout player for us and captains Hailey Lassen and Amelia Willson have created a ton of scoring opportunities for us along with their leadership,” Douglas said.

Sophomore Emily Downing has had a fabulous start to the year as she consistently worked all summer, coming into camp in peak fitness level. Downing has also been doing a stellar job of putting in work after practice. She’s got a hunger to be better each and every day, which Douglas said has impressed her.



PHOTOS FROM CASTLETONSPORTS
Peyton Richardson, above, prepares to make a pass. The team, below, celebrates after a thrilling overtime win against SUNY Oneonta.

Spartans fall short on homecoming weekend

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

On a sunny day, music is blasting in the parking lot of the Hoff dorms and just under 4,000 Castleton students and fans gathered with one thing in mind.

Homecoming football.

As the parking lot filled and the grills came out, they all awaited the 12 p.m. kickoff of the Spartans taking on Massachusetts Maritime (MMA) on Sept. 21 which saw Castleton fall 20-14 to MMA’s heavy run game.

The Spartans led in the passing department of the game with 190 yards through the air, but MMA hammered the run game with 178 rushing yards.

The game kicked off with the Spartans finding themselves down 7-0 in the first quarter after MMA came rushing down the field with a five-and-a-half-minute drive that saw seven of the 11 plays be rushing.

Later in the quarter, the Spartans special teams stood out as CJ Childs blocked a punt which then gave Castleton great field position to score on their next drive when Wes Cournoyer rushed in a six-yard touchdown. However, the extra point would be missed, and the Spartans would still be down 7-6.

On the next Spartans drive, Cournoyer would lead the team down the field to the MMA eight-yard line and Eydan Linares would make a 25-yard field goal to give the Spartans its first lead of the game going up 9-6.

With a little over two minutes remaining the half MMA scored again to regain the lead 14-9 going into halftime.

The third quarter was eaten up by an eight-minute drive from MMA which resulted in a touchdown to bring the score to 20-9 but the Spartans special



PHOTOS FROM AVERY BOUCHARD
Quarterback Wes Cournoyer (top left) escaping pressure in the pocket while trying to extend the play. Kevin McDonough (top right) making one of his 19 tackles on the day. #90 Davin Mercer and #56 Julian Chiemingo Rivera (below) lined up ready to rush the quarterback.

teams continued to dominate their time on the field as the extra point attempt from MMA was blocked by Childs and then returned by Ian DeTullo to make it 20-11.

The Spartans would try and battle back in the fourth quarter but would only put a field goal

on the scoreboard and would fall to MMA for their first loss of the season.

“It was definitely a tough one, not the way we wanted it to go for the home opener and homecoming, but we can’t go back and play it again. The first loss of the year is always a real-

ity check, time to get back on track this week,” said senior linebacker Kevin McDonough.

Despite the loss McDonough found himself in the Spartan history books with his 19 tackle game which is tied for third most in a single game and most in a game since 2016.

Quarterback Wes Cournoyer echoed what McDonough said, “We really appreciate all the support from Castleton nation, it was a great turn out and the environment was great. But we didn’t prevail and didn’t show up to play but we need to be able to bounce back from

it.”

The Spartans then faced off against University of Massachusetts Dartmouth on Sept. 28 which saw the Spartans fall 60-10. The Spartans look to get back on track Oct 5 against Westfield State at Dave Wolk Stadium.

Women’s soccer begins to face adversity

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The Spartan women’s soccer team was back in action looking to capitalize on a strong start, with five matches to catch you up on. They started by hitting the road to play MCLA where they exploded offensively. Senior attacker Rylee Pepin marked her first goal of the season of which we will surely see more of. With this 4-1 win over MCLA they extended their winning tendencies to a 4-2 record.

Next they took on LEC conference opponents Rhode Island College (RIC). In a tight 1-0 win the girls took their first conference points of the year. It was a defensive battle between the two squads.

Senior defenders Maddie Lindgren and Lauren Fotter held it down on the back end, leading a defense that opponents have struggled to penetrate. Goaltender Emma Ezzo had another great showing, which is becoming a consisten-

cy for this Spartan squad. She had 10 saves for her second shutout of the season.

Maggie McKearin scored her fifth goal of the season, assisted by Alexis Billings for the winner. The two combined for four goals and 10 points between them in the two games against MCLA and RIC. The LEC recognized Alexis Billings for her offensive talents with an offensive player of the week award.

Middlebury, the number seven ranked team in the nation came to visit the Spartans on Sept 25. They played a hard-fought battle in the rain, but ultimately fell 5-0. Despite the Spartans holding off the top scorers of Middlebury, their younger players broke through and eventually took over the game. The passing and coordination of Middlebury eventually overwhelmed our girls.

The WestConn Wolves came to visit the following Saturday, another strong opponent this time in conference play. Both teams played an even first

45 minutes, locked at zeroes. The stands were fairly full for attendance, with many cheering and on the edge of their seats. At the 63-minute mark the Wolves broke through to take a lead on a ball delivered into the box and finished off by a Kelly Martyanov.

The girls fought back hard and controlled the ball well in the second half. At the 72-minute marker they drew a free kick from 40 yards out, which was lofted in beating the goalie but not the crossbar. The rebound was soared over the net, just missing their best chance of the match.

Again, their defense and goaltending were strong with Emma Ezzo recording 8 saves on 9 shots on target. Gwen Bridges, a sophomore center back played a full 90 minutes and matched the high speed of the Wolves offense well.

Sunday Sept 29, the Spartans hit the road to finish a busy stretch of play against Colby-Sawyer. This one went the way of the Chargers, in a

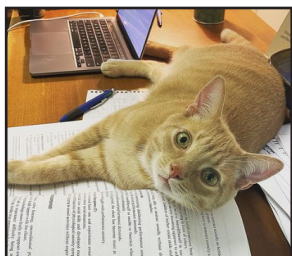
2-0 bout. The Spartans defense and another good effort from Emma Ezzo between the pipes were not enough to keep the Chargers off the score sheet. The offense went scoreless again, making it three straight without a tally.

“We had a bit of a rough weekend with two hard games. We struggled connecting and moving forward against tough competition but look forward to a fresh start battling back for our third conference match against Keene State on Wednesday,” said Gwen Bridges who as a sophomore has slated herself as a big part of this Spartan backbone.

The girls three game skid took them to .500, at five wins and five losses. They have a few days of practice coming up to prepare for three LEC conference match ups in their next four games. The girls look to bounce back and find their offensive groove as a strong back end continues to support them.



PHOTO FROM CASTLETONSPORTS
Maggie Parker ready to send a cross to the other side of the field.



NEWS

VTSU Johnson has its own campus cat named Frederic!

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ARTS

Artist Joe Vyvial talks about a painting he made for his grandparents.

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SPORTS

Track and Field team excels despite not having a track.

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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, October 25, 2024

Student workers upset at not being paid

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Vermont State University is experiencing significant difficulties in its student employment program. Many student workers have not been paid due to contract issues. Some students and faculty believe the problem stems from technical challenges and a need for more communication.

The delays have impacted both work-study and non-work-study positions, leaving students wondering when they will receive their money. Some believe the number of contracts overburdened existing systems, resulting in widespread confusion and frustration.

There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding this entire situation. Many student workers reported that the problem began with a payroll system malfunctioning that processed their contracts and payments.

Zoey Teal, a student tutor in the STEM department, said, "My boss told me someone had to reboot this computer system that resends our contracts, and for some reason, it took like a month to get updated, but I still don't know what that means."

Students were left waiting for their contracts to be renewed or even sent out, resulting in a backlog of payments. Teal claimed she had not gotten her contract renewal despite working for the department for nearly a year.

"Usually, every semester, you get sent a new contract to get paid through, and I hadn't been sent the contract until a week ago," Teal said.

Student Employment Coordinator Michelle Perry highlighted the process concerns that are causing these delays. Perry said contracts must be signed and submitted before student employees can be officially added to the UKG system, the University's payroll processing software.

"If you're not being paid, it means you have not completed something in the process; either you didn't complete onboarding if you're a new hire, or you haven't signed the contract," Perry said. "We cannot send the contract to UKG until it is signed."

Perry stated that the UKG software has often been crashing, adding to the complications. She handles many contracts, with 1,500 processed last year alone and 130 unsigned contracts this year.

"There's a lot of things that it doesn't do that we wish it did. It has been crashing a lot lately. So, it has been a problem, yes, but there's not a person in the whole system that's not going to say that UKG is a problem," Perry said. "I am sending them 300 contracts a day. And I think UKG doesn't like it."

Despite efforts to improve the system, the backlog continues. Perry, however, said UKG may change within a year or two. Returning students must sign new contracts each semester to continue working and receive pay.

The frustration among student employees is apparent. According to Teal, just a tiny percentage of the students in her department have been paid.

"It's only happening to certain people, which is weird," Steel said. There are 12 STEM tutors, and in the month of September, three people got paid out of the 12."

See 'Unpaid' on page 6.

Fleming memorialized in Jeffords

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

On Oct. 15, members of the VTSU-Castleton community gathered in the Jeffords Hall atrium to unveil a memorial for former Academic Dean Honoree Fleming, 77, who was fatally shot on the Rail Trail last October.

The memorial, comprised of a resolution passed by the Vermont House of Representatives, a picture of Fleming with a verse by Y.B. Yeats chosen by husband Ron Powers and a watercolor on easel by Vanessa Hampton, serves as a reminder of Fleming's outstanding contributions to Castleton.

"My hope is that when people see this installation that they remember Honoree not for the way that she died, but for the way that she lived. With love and compassion, with grit and determination, with brilliance. I think that's the legacy she would want to leave behind," said VTSU Special Projects Coordinator Meredith Fletcher, who served as Fleming's administrative assistant for 10 years prior to Fleming's retirement in 2012.

Fletcher noted her continuous advocacy for students, breakthroughs in biochemistry and love for her family.

"Being in the presence of such greatness every day was an enormous honor," she said.

Joe Mark, friend and 32-year Castleton Academic Dean who also worked with Fleming, recalled fine Italian dinners shared with his wife Nancy, Fleming and Powers, which inspired the ceremony's food service.

"She became a fantastic Italian chef," he said, also describing their conversations as "scintillating" and "highly opinionated."

Mark shared that he had confidently recommended Fleming's hiring as Associate Academic Dean following his retirement.



LEO RICHARDSON

People gather for Honoree Fleming's memorial installation in Jeffords, top, husband Ron Powers, left, and a framed picture of Fleming.

"Her scholarly credentials, her publications, her teaching experience at both Trinity College and Middlebury College, just made her resume the top of the pile. And it was a very, very easy decision to recommend her hiring," he said.

Adding depth to her impressive career, Fleming was also a first-generation college student whose mother immigrated to America from Ireland. It was these exact roots that helped

her identify with and support students.

"She was a champion of students, especially those who were struggling to overcome the challenges they faced...You didn't have to have rank or power or status to earn Honoree's respect and attention. Far from it. If anything, because of her Irish Republican heritage, which she wore so proudly, she particularly valued the underdogs," Mark said.

Powers eloquently recounted how they met, over 40 years ago, by chance on an airplane and how their love stood the test of time.

"Honoree radiated goodness and kindness and decency and love," he said. "She made me feel cared for and seen... She was the giving tree."

He reiterated his son Dean's statement at the memorial service following her death, referring to her as an "agnostic

Students upset with voyeurism incident response

By Brandon Burmeister
Castleton Spartan

On Monday, September 30, students and faculty were shocked by a news article from the Rutland Herald and posts on Yik Yak about an incident that occurred four days earlier.



Expel the Intrusive Student and Enhance Privacy Measures at Vermont State University

Started September 30, 2024

121

Signatures

200

Next Goal

VTSU students are signing an online petition on YikYak to show their displeasure with school's actions.

another woman who entered, pulled the shower curtain to find him standing there. He then claimed to be "testing the water." Soon after, the first woman's boyfriend decided to take matters into his own hands.

"I grab my stuff to go take a shower and then I hear arguing in the hallway, and I'm like, 'what's going on?' cause it's pretty loud," said student Frankie Young. "I'm overhearing someone's boyfriend confronting this guy about being in the women's bathroom."

Young added that "(Kane) was making excuses" to the boyfriend throughout the confrontation and that there are only two bathrooms, a men's and a women's, located on opposite sides of the floor.

The police have since arrested him and the case is ongoing. Kane has also taken a leave of absence from school and is seeking mental health treatment.

Most of the student body, however, were completely unaware of the incident until days later, when the Rutland Herald released an article and the information spread like wildfire on the social media app Yik Yak.

"A coward's app," remarked Association Director of Public Safety Keith Molinari, referring to the app's anonymity.

Students have since used the app to pour out their anger and frustrations, both towards Kane and the school. This has resulted in many slurs, accusations of other crimes, even spread-

ing the Facebook accounts of Kane's family members.

"It's supposed to be a student space where you can speak freely. But I do think people can go too far on it," said Billy Dornburgh, another student who lives in Ellis.

By Tuesday, Yik Yak and media outlets like WCAX and the Rutland Herald were the primary way most students had heard of the incident. This frustrated much of the student body, with students arguing that the school should have quickly addressed it.

"They obviously don't want our school to look bad," said Ruby Durfee, a student who lived right down the hall from Kane. "But stuff like this happens at Harvard, Yale and other big schools. So, I think that worrying about (their image) makes them look even worse than coming forward and acknowledging it."

Because of her proximity to Kane, she had fears about whether or not he might have been spying on her. With nearly a week gone by and no word from the school, she felt as if it was a poor reflection of the school looking after its students.

"If they're acknowledging it, then it actually shows that the adults at our college actually do care about us," she said.

On Thursday, Dean of Students Jamia Danzy released an email addressing the incident, giving resources for where students can find access to help at the facility. When prompted about why the school waited

to respond, Danzy responded with the following.

"I know there were some concerns about transparency, and it really wasn't about trying to hide anything. In this situation, there were victims involved, and we wanted to make sure that they were supported and had the resources that they needed. And in this situation, the individual was arrested, and because the individual was arrested and there was not necessarily an ongoing threat or someone who we didn't know who the perpetrator was, we didn't issue a timely warning," said Danzy.

While the situation itself is ongoing, Castleton students are demanding change with a petition for more enhanced safety measures at VTSU reaching over 120 signatures.

Molinari said he supports the petition and that while Public Safety does their best with the resources given, they could use more help. He urged students to reach out with any concerns going forward.

"If there's an incident where you don't know if it's a crime, it's weird and it's bugging you, call Public Safety. We're 24/7 dispatched and our number is (802) 468-1288. That is my suggestion to any student here on campus. Please, please pick up the phone. Call Public safety."

With contributions from Pearl Bellomo

More admin. transparency needed in Ellis Hall incident

A lack of transparency leads to a lack of trust. A lack of trust and transparency leads to a weak university.

A college campus should be a place where students feel safe, supported, and informed, but when communication breaks down, so does the foundation that holds its community together.

When Castleton student Lucas Kane was caught lurking in the women's showers in Ellis Hall, students were left feeling scared and confused. And understandably so.

Even worse, most students didn't hear about his arrest from the university.

In fact, most students only found out about Kane through word of mouth from their peers, or through posts on YikYak, an app where users are able to leave anonymous comments with other people in their radius.

YikYak, not the university, became the main source of information for many.

The Rutland Herald then published a report about Kane's arrest two days after the incident, followed by coverage from WXAC a day later. However, despite growing unease and confusion on campus, the university stayed silent for nearly a week.

It wasn't until Oct. 3, six days after Kane was reported, that the school finally addressed the situation.

In an email titled "Campus Incident Update," Jamia Danzy, dean of students for all Vermont State University campuses, wrote she was "legally prohibited from sharing any details about the incident due to privacy laws."

While this may be true, the delayed response and lack of transparency have only deepened students' mistrust in the administration. By the time the university acknowledged the situation, it was too late to address the growing concerns, leaving students frustrated, feeling unheard, and still with a lack of information or update.

No further updates have been provided about Kane since.

Yes, we can sympathize with the administration for finding themselves intertwined with this incident

as they navigate legal constraints, campus safety, and maintaining trust with students. But, the pressure VTSU faces does not change the reality of students' concerns, and their silence speaks louder than their words.

Students don't want to discover a student was arrested for lurking in the women's showers from an anonymous app. They don't want to rely on whispers from their peers to know what's happening on their own campus.

Students are asking for transparent, timely communication from their administration. They want to be informed, not just after the fact, but when incidents occur.

They want to be informed, not just after the fact, but when incidents occur.

They want to know that their university cares about their safety and well-being enough to keep them in the loop.

It's time for Vermont State University to step up and provide that transparency.

A stronger, more trusting community can only exist if the administration commits to being open and honest with its students. That's how we rebuild trust. That's how we move forward, because we truly are better together.

- Emily Ely



JOE VYVIAL

It's vital to vote

This country has had a divisive political climate for some time now. In 2016, we saw an election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton who at the time, were the two most disliked and divided presidential candidates to date. This comes from 30 years of recorded polling of registered voters from ABC news. The following elections we've witnessed since have not been much different. The American people have not been given a choice between two candidates but between the lesser evil. This in itself is a tragedy. The two-party system in America is failing its voters. As we near the next election date, it is our responsibility to take an interest in the future of this country.

If you have been following the presidential race you most likely tuned in to see the highly anticipated debate between Harris and Trump. There has since been much speculation on who came out on top of this debate, with both candidates claiming a win. However, this is less of a winner and loser situation and more so about who you can believe in.

This debate mimicked an SNL sketch, having many notable and at times comical moments like the "they're eating cats and dogs" tangent from Trump. The claim was about Haitian immigrants, and how they are supposedly eating domestic pets in Springfield, Ohio. Trump was fact-checked on this claim, as Springfield city officials have repeatedly said there have been "no credible reports" of this occurring in their city.

Trump is using his airtime to push a baseless rumour, and generalize Haitian people to polarize immigration further, an issue that's already a hot topic between Americans. In reality, Haitian immigration

has nothing to do with domestic pets being eaten. It contributes to a larger narrative for the Republican party that has been created to polarize immigration stances.

On the other side of the debate, Harris consistently avoided answering questions directly. This was interpreted by viewers in a negative light, and many found her question dodging annoying. She also repeatedly returned to her two main talking points; supporting women in America, and her personal ties to the middle class, which are her origins. This is a strategy Harris and her team implement, where she says less on certain issues while hammering her points on others. This strategy is rooted in a belief that if she lets Trump talk himself into circles while agitating him, he will eventually talk himself out of a presidency. So, if Kamala doesn't do or say anything out of place, Trump will continue to make impulsive mistakes.

Since the debate, the fact checking involved has been widely discussed. Whether you were pleased to see the candidates' points checked, or felt it was unjust for whatever reason the main take away should be to not take everything said at face value, even if it is coming from the mouth of a Presidential candidate. And this goes both ways. It's important to think for yourself and do your own fact checking despite the debate doing it for you.

While discussing the economy, it is essential to fact-check both candidates' talking points. In this issue, as with many others, there is often manipulation and intentional misinformation to misguide voters. Trump claims to have had the greatest economy during his tenure as President and promises to repeat this achievement.

The Joint Economic Committee (JEC), a government entity responsible for tracking and providing information on the U.S. economy, reported that the economy was indeed strong under Trump before COVID-19.

However, this strength began under President Obama, who inherited an economy weakened by the Great Recession; a crisis that the former Chairman of the Federal Reserve described as 'the worst financial crisis in history, including the Great Depression.' Over his two terms, Obama steadily rebuilt the economy, laying the foundation for the growth that Trump later continued. Contrary to Trump's frequent claim that he 'inherited a disaster,' the trajectory of economic recovery was already well underway when he took office.

According to the JEC during the last two years of the Obama administration, the annual median household income increased \$4,800. This is three times more than the \$1,400 increase during the first two years of the Trump administration. By the end of the Obama administration, the economy had experienced 76 consecutive months of job growth. Since Trump became president, the streak has been extended to 111 consecutive months.: During the last 35 months of the Obama administration, non-farm job growth averaged 227,000 per month. During the first 35 months of the Trump administration, the average was 36,000 jobs per month less, averaging 191,000 per month.

All of this is to illustrate a claim that is not as it seems. It's not just important to look at issues on their surface level, but to know the history behind them and the claims surrounding them.

The common democrat argument is to look at the economy fall off heavily under Trump during covid, but to the Republican defence this was a global pandemic that effected the global economy, not just America. However, it shouldn't be forgotten that Trump publicly endorsed non-medical treatments, suggesting one might inject bleach to help fight COVID. This is an issue as he is the President, and people are going to heed his advice.

Though it may be hard and a bit boring, take the time to look at the tax plan put forward by Harris. Take the time to look at the plans put forward by Trump. Research tariffs, listen to experts, draw your own conclusions. Take this seriously. Understand each candidates claims and the demographics that they discuss. Decide where you want American tax money to go. Decide if you want it to stay where it is or go other places. Think critically, and vote.

We must consider how the policies of our next president will shape our communities, protect vulnerable populations, and safeguard the ideals of equality, justice, and opportunity. It's crucial to think beyond our individual preferences. We must ask ourselves what kind of country do we want to leave for future generations?

Now, more than ever, its vital to be engaged in politics, to register, and to vote. Vote with purpose, and vote for what you believe in. If you have questions or are wanting to register to vote, VTSU can help you do so.

- Jackson Edwards

Check us out online at castletonspartan.com



SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

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Pearl Bellomo

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Humane society helps out with Helene

Unsurprisingly, Hurricane Helene caused serious damage to the United States. The hurricane hit Florida on Sept. 26, 2024.

NPR estimates that Hurricane Helene has wrecked tens of thousands of homes in the Tampa Bay region alone. Not only that, according to ABC News, Helene has killed around 230 people in the U.S alone.

Even through all of this darkness facing us in our country, there are still glimpses of hope and kindness in communities all over the United States. One of these glimpses is occurring in a local community very close to this campus.

According to WCAX, The Rutland County Humane Society took in eight cats and two dogs from shelters in the Southeast region where the hurricane hit. According to WCAX some of the states that these animals came from include Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana before the storm hit.

They were flown to Vermont to create space for shelters to take on more animals. WCAX provides insight from the Rutland County Humane Society president Mei Brown.

"We're happy to do our part and help out. I mean, there's an environmental crisis, other crises that are always taking place

around the country, so we're all part of a network to help one another when there is a time of need," Brown said in the news segment. "We're prepared for that. We always check to see how many animals we have already in the shelter before we take on more, but we were glad to take on this 10."

In addition, NBC news added more information to the Rutland County Humane Society's noble act.

"The Humane Society says they partnered with BISSELL Pet Foundation to help make space for shelters that are taking in displaced animals from Hurricane Helene."

In addition, NBC News was able to talk to Rutland County Humane Society Animal Health Technician Stephanie Babcock. Babcock explains to NBC News "We're not necessarily pulling the animals that are in danger, but they are making room for the animals that need to come into the shelter that have been displaced."

In addition, Babcock also added to NBC News, "Once they get here, I just give them a quick physical exam, make sure they're all healthy. I boosted any vaccines that may need to be boosted that hasn't been done recently. I boost their flea and tick prevention as well as

their dewormer. I run a fecal exam on everyone, make sure they're clear of internal parasites, and then I get them all labeled with their name tags and ready to go up for adoption."

Babcock also gave more information on the Rutland County Humane Society's decision to NBC News.

"If we can help in some way, we have people up here in Vermont who are looking to adopt these animals and need homes, and the situation is going to be dire in the shelters where they are. So, it is a win-win for all of us, including the animals."

- Gavin Bradley

Pulitzer winner inspires journalism students



DAVE BLOW

Lane DeGregory discusses her career to a class.

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Short story books, eventually revealed as sources of inspiration when she feels stuck, lined the huge bookshelf that sat against the yellow painted wall in the background of the Zoom call.

Pulitzer Prize winning Tampa Bay Times journalist Lane DeGregory visited VTSU Castleton Feature Writing class on Sept 30 after students had studied her prize-winning piece, "The Girl in the Window."

DeGregory told students she was known for being nosy and curious ever since she was a little girl, and it has followed her through her 57 years of living.

"Sometimes I have to tell

myself to shut up," she said with a long laugh.

DeGregory shared how she has known since kindergarten that she always wanted to be a journalist. She created a newspaper for her elementary school and was editor-in-chief of her high school newspaper located in Rockville, Maryland.

DeGregory continued to pursue her love for feature writing and received bachelor's and master's degrees before entering the profession.

Despite the amount of devotion DeGregory has for journalism, there was a point in time when she was up in the air about it all.

After being promoted to an editor, she realized that was not what she wanted to do. DeGregory decided to apply

to law school but before going realized that was not where she belonged either.

"I just wanna do journalism," she said, taking students back to her "ah ha" moment realizing that even though the lawyers were making a lot of money, it wasn't for her.

"I don't regret it," DeGregory said. "I still get to wake up and be the one to tell the story. It is such an honor and a blessing I get to do this job."

DeGregory shared some of her favorite and most successful note-taking tips during the class interview, when asked by a student.

Seconds after being asked, DeGregory pulled out a laminated sheet of paper that explains her process step-by-step in the neatest handwriting.

She said how she always starts with writing the date and time first, and every time she flips the page, she writes it again. Next, she makes a space where she writes down her observations using the five senses.

"It felt oily and heavy," DeGregory said as an example of the scene in Florida after Hurricane Helene.

"It helps you transport the reader there," she said. "Take notes on your notes."

DeGregory shared how she also makes timelines of each person she interviews, and then focuses on their highlights.

And when it is time to get

writing, she tells students she puts her notes somewhere out of sight, forcing her to actually just tell the story.

"It becomes so much easier," she said.

Another student asked, "What advice would you give to young reporters?"

DeGregory answered to aim for objectivity. She said how crucial it is to know yourself and be honest with who is partnering with you.

She said the longest she has worked on a story was three years and was based on homeless housing. She explained how she had to go back to the story every six weeks due to the operator's timeline of making new installments.

DeGregory then pulled out a huge stack of notes that she has been adding to since February and revealed it to the camera.

When asked how she deals with writer's block, DeGregory said, "I don't let myself get there."

She explained how when she feels herself lacking motivation on how to start a story, she will take a break... but not completely.

"Take a walk, bake, play with the dog," she said, adding that the needed time away is good to simply just think about your story and figure it out while doing other activities.

DeGregory said she leaves notebooks for herself every-

where. One spot she shared was in the bathroom, as it's the only quiet place from her husband and dogs, and while she is showering or getting ready, she can reach for the notepad when a creative thought hits her mind.

"A story is like making my bed," DeGregory said, once you start with the sheets, the rest just flows easily.

Throughout the whole interview, DeGregory also hinted at her love for Diet Coke. She continuously referred to how long something was going to take based on how many Diet Cokes it would include. She said breaks are just as important as sitting down and writing, and this is where she would treat herself to a Diet Coke.

DeGregory also expressed her feelings about how the internet impacted the journalism industry.

"In 2008 one third of revenue was lost when the internet came," she said, adding that most of the decrease was from Craigslist.

DeGregory also said how different her day-to-day life is now after the pandemic. She said how her company went from two floors to one to save money, as well as went from 400 people working to only about 200.

She explained how the newsroom was much more upbeat and there was much more

ability to converse and bounce ideas off one another.

"I really miss the newsroom," she said. "The collaboration was so exciting, and it felt nice to have a safety net of 100 smart people."

She explained how after the pandemic people were being asked to give up their desks and work from home to allow the newer writers to be in the newsroom. DeGregory decided to let her spot go and went remote, although she said, "there is nothing like the vibrancy of a newsroom."

During a follow-up conversation from the class, student Carly Centeno, shared how the way DeGregory talked about the newsroom and the experiences she had, gets her really excited for when it is her time to be in the hot seat.

"I LOVED the way she talked about being in the newsroom. It was hyping me up to like wanna be in a newsroom," she said.

As the class came to an end, DeGregory wanted to end with a helpful note. She emphasized how important it is to take care of what you need to do so that when it comes time to start writing, you can focus on it with ease.

"Take care of your shit," she said with empowerment. "Don't waste time sitting in front of a blank screen."

Sir Frederic the feline clinical counselor at VTSU Johnson

By Dayne Bell
Spartan Contributor

Editors Note: This story was reprinted from the VTSU Johnson newspaper, Basement Medicine.

In 2021, Moria Sheridan was in the second month of her practicum in the then Northern Vermont University Johnson Wellness Center when she'd begun fostering a litter of kittens, born in a barn and rescued by a local no-kill shelter.

Sheridan, the clinical counselor for VTSU Johnson, proposed the idea of bringing the kittens into the Wellness Center to her boss Kate McCarthy, VTSU's director of health and wellness.

"It was kind of magical from the very beginning," recalled McCarthy. "We've always done work with therapy dogs in Vermont and brought dogs to campus. And then Moria had the idea of bringing a cat."

With permission, Sheridan created "Animal Friends," a group educating students about human-animal relationships and roles that animals play in their lives, starting by bringing the two-month-old babies in for students to interact with. It was the first time that students were allowed to gather in an enclosed space on the campus since the pandemic.

Sheridan described these first interactions as "kitty chaos."

That semester, each visit with the kitties was the same. Students sat together, in a circle along the edges of a tight room in the back of Senators, never more than five at a time, almost always with a group waiting outside. Some sat in the available chairs while others had moved to the ground, cross-legged, wiggling their fingers and holding wooden dowels attached to string and feathers.

Crumpled newspaper and little plastic balls rolled across

the floor as three tiny felines darted around, from person to person, batting them in all directions. On one side of the carpet, a particularly orange one sat inside a cardboard box, swatting playfully at the hands reaching inside.

"Meeting with Frederic was always very nice," recalled Johnson alum Zoe Avent, a member of the first group of students who interacted with him.

"He made me miss my own cat a lot of the time... But I had a good time. It really made my day when I would get to see him," she said.

Because Frederic was a foster, Moria found homes for him and the other two cats. This would have meant the end of the campus' interactions with them.

"The person who adopted Frederic had a Chihuahua dog, and they picked him up on a Friday and I went away that weekend," she explained.

But the very next day, the adopter called Moria to say that she'd have to take him back. The cat was giving their chihuahua allergic reactions. According to the family, the animals' interactions resulted in the dog breaking out into hives. They loved Frederic, but they just couldn't keep him.

"I've never in all my years heard of a dog being allergic to a cat," Sheridan continued. "It could have been fear induced. Hives can be like that too."

She gave the adopter access to her house keys, and when she returned, Frederic was in her basement.

"I looked in the window of the basement and there he was just walking around, meow, meow, meow," she said.

Once "Animal Friends" was established, Moria Sheridan began sending emails to students who signed up for the group. She sent photos of him and other kittens she fostered, hosted contests to see

who could guess his weight, and made Frederic stickers and swag for students to hand out.

At first, students were only able to see the kittens by going down the sketchy, crumbling stairs and following the path beside Sterns Dining Hall, past the two brightly colored plastic lawn chairs to the back of the Senators residence halls where the Wellness Center was located. Then, McCarthy got the idea to bring Frederic to an upcoming open house.

Sheridan had an old stroller that she'd used for another cat in the past, and the two decided that taking Frederic out into the Johnson campus would be a great way to get involved.

And it took off from there.

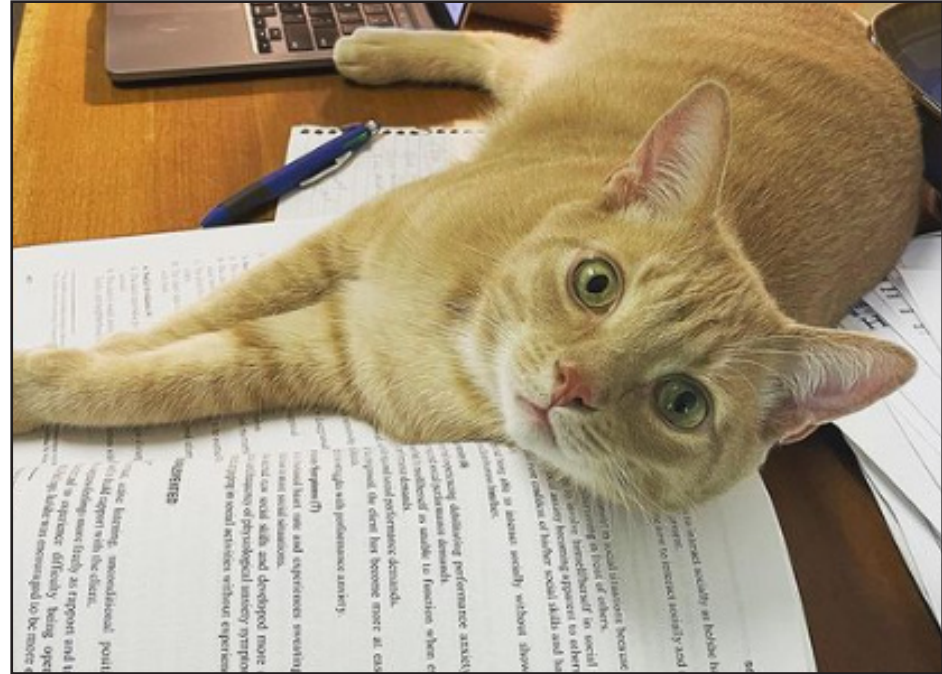
Frederic became a campus celebrity; students knew what was coming every time they saw the stroller roll towards them, or sitting with Sheridan beside the Fireplace lounge.

Today, Frederic has been a full-fledged worker in the Johnson Wellness Center for almost four years now, sitting in both small group and individual sessions with students.

Initially, Sheridan worried about how Frederic would adjust to frequent interactions with groups. She says that with animal-assisted therapy, it's important that the animal wants to be a part of it. Frederic was an anxious kitten, and after long summers of not interacting with as many people, it was possible that he would grow unaccustomed. But every school year, she said Frederic is eager to get back to work.

"He hears the door to the carrier open and he gets right in," Moria said. "There's never been a day that I've had to go find him to bring him. He's ready to go."

Before she was a counselor for Johnson, Sheridan had been a veterinary nurse for 30 years. While there aren't any licenses for animal therapy specifically, after getting her masters, Sheri-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAYNE BELL

Frederic poses with owner Moria Sheridan and students at VTSU Johnson.

dan obtained a grad certificate in Human-Animal Interactions from Colorado State University, a program that teaches safe and ethical techniques for animal work in therapy and interventions. Frederic has spots throughout the group

room where he retreats should he need a break, a well-known cue to some of his regular visitors. He's known to be an escape artist, and often times he'll take breaks by standing in front of the door, meowing for someone to let him out. But

sometimes his cues are more "subtle." Sheridan said that while students are usually good with respecting his boundaries, there have been instances when she's had to intervene.

See "Frederic" on page

Volunteers make care packages to ease cancer treatment effects

By Tori Raymond
Spartan Contributor

"Everybody knows someone... everybody knows somebody," said Jen Larson, a Castleton resident, describing the connection we all have with cancer patients.

She has worked continuously with patients for years - just not in the way you would expect.

Larson lost her father to Cancer in 1997, and the disease has seemed to follow close by with her mother and late husband also being diagnosed.

"I was looking for something to do that could involve the community on a local level while impacting the community on a local level," Larson said.

Since 2015, she's worked tirelessly putting together what she calls Comfort Packages for chemotherapy and radiation patients at the Foley Cancer Center at Rutland Regional Medical Center.

In these bags are self-care

products to help the patients with the symptoms that come along with these difficult treatments. She crowd-surfs on multiple social media platforms and receives donations to buy a patient a care package.

She makes it clear she only does this from the heart.

"We make the price point affordable, with each package being \$30 and that is the exact cost of the products with a miniscule amount in there to cover taxes and shipping and things like that," she said. "There's no profit taken."

Everyone knows someone who's dealt with cancer. You're probably thinking about that person now. Whether they have passed on, are still fighting, or have been cured, we can all agree that it's a difficult process.

However, most people don't know the toll that chemotherapy and radiation treatments take on patients both mentally and physically.

Alyssa Audet, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor



COURTESY PHOTO

Staff members at the Foley Cancer Center assemble Comfort Packages for cancer patients.

years ago, can speak for this first-hand.

"I was a patient at FCC (Foley Cancer Center) for radiation treatments and I took oral chemotherapy," Audet said. "The side effects from radiation can be pretty intense ... I did experience dry skin and chapped lips. I would also easily become very cold."

Audet has also been involved with helping Larson put

witnessed the reactions of many patients receiving these comfort packages as well.

"Working at FCC, when patients received the comfort care packages it made their day so special. In such a dark time in someone's life going through chemo and radiation, a gift like that made them smile," she said.

Both Larson and Audet express how thankful the staff and patients at Rutland Regional Medical Center are for the packages that are donated every 12 to 18 months.

Janice Austin, an RN at Rutland Hospital for over 20 years, recalls an interaction with a patient who received one of these packages.

"She was so thankful she cried. Chemo patients are so grateful for all the care they receive and it makes your heart feel good about even the smallest gesture," Austin said. "I cannot express the gratitude the FCC patients showed when they received them."

Larson calls the act of kind-

ness a "paycheck of the heart" and is incredibly humble about the whole project. She also recalls her biggest year of donations, which was held in memory of a close friend, Scott Raymond, whose daughter has been involved with the project since the beginning. This particular year they donated 350 packages from over \$10,500 raised.

Larson speaks about how the local community comes together because of the common knowledge of the topic. She knows that it's a difficult time in someone's life while going through chemo and said she just wants to make the hardships better for everyone she possibly can.

"It's just a non-discriminatory disease. It doesn't care how much money you have, it doesn't care who you are, it doesn't care about anything, what kind of job you have, how educated you are ... It doesn't care," she said.

Maddie on the street

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



Question:
What are you going to be for Halloween?



Emma Kirby
Sophmore

“I am going to be Ginger Spice from the girl group Spice Girls. We have a group of five girls so it’s perfect!”



Natalie Webster
Freshman

“I’m going to be a cop. It’s a duo costume though because I’m doing it with someone else, who is going to be an inmate from prison.”



Tyler Mcalin
Senior

“I am going to be Zac Erriffic. He is a very funny influencer on Tik Tok that a like a lot.”



Caitlin Flaherty
Freshamn

“For Halloween I am going to be a pirate. My two friends and I wanted to have matching costumes that wasn’t too overused and something that was a little different.”

Check out our website and socials!

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How early college is affecting ‘Slater Nation’

Reilly Marsden
Castleton Spartan

The gymnasium bleachers were packed with people who were excited to start the day—except for one section. The senior bleachers of Fair Haven Union Middle and High School were notably empty for the first Principal’s List assembly this past Friday.

Fair Haven, a school participating in the Early College Program, allows students to earn college credit while completing their senior year of high school. This opportunity’s impact is felt by the entire student body.

“My upper-level electives are clearly shrinking every year. Look at all the extra books on the shelf,” says Michael Bruce, a history teacher with a 24-year career at Fair Haven.

A graduate of the school himself, Bruce channels his passion for the institution into his teaching. As the teacher of AP Psychology, as well as two other upper-level electives, he is concerned for the longevity of advanced programs.

“If we continue the way we’re trending right now with more kids going and less classes like

this, it will start to limit the opportunities for people that stay.

Benjamin Worthing, one of FHUMHS’s co-principals, emphasizes how the lack of seniors within the building alters the process of how underclassmen integrate into the high school.

“One thing that happens at the school-level is that we lose some of our most mature students, who are the role models, so that’s a tough thing to deal with,” he said.

In a small-town school with roughly 600 students spanning grades 7-12, seniors are depended on to lead traditions. When 73 out of the 90 seniors do not attend all-school assemblies, there is a dramatic shift in culture.

“When I first started here, that [the senior bleachers] would be full. All the seniors were here all day long,” he said.

Worthing’s mention of a culture shift was also mentioned in an interview with Clarabel Redondo, an Early College student and current Fair Haven senior.

Redondo, who took three out of the seven AP classes offered her junior year, states that Early College was the most natural step in her education path. Both of her siblings also pursued



REILLY MARSDEN

The seniors section of the bleachers is pretty empty at an assembly at Fair Haven high school as a result of Early College student departures.

Wrestlers bond on Killington hike

Logan Bruce
Castleton Spartan

Step after step, climbing elevation rapidly, the Castleton wrestling team finally makes it to the top of Killington Mountain, the second tallest mountain in Vermont.

They started and finished as a team.

They got to the top following Bucklin trail, which covers 3.7 miles from bottom to top. Elevations vary from a low of 1,859 feet to a high of 4,204 feet. The trail has different terrain the whole way up, starting flat before leading to a marshy, muddy river bed. After conquering that you have a steep elevation filled with huge rocks, forcing you to climb on your hands and feet.

Why hike to the top of a mountain for team bonding?

“I personally just like hiking. It makes me feel at home like I am with my family, giving me that peace of mind. It’s a good way to get to know the team and test unknown capabilities,” said sophomore wrestler Jake Long.

The team’s capabilities, by the way, are incredible this year, Long said.

Believe it or not, the smell in the woods climbing Killington Mountain earlier this semester was different from the usual outdoor smell, said sophomore wrestler Joe Kennedy.

“As you went up you began to see the incoming fall season. The smell you can’t describe. It is just something you have to experience,” he said with a slight smile.

Long also spoke about the smells along the hike.

“At the start, we walked through the marsh and you got

hints of earthy muddy smells. As you went up most of the trees were pine trees and evergreens and it brought me back to that Christmas smell, making me think back to my childhood,” Long said.

Kennedy also spoke about the bonding that happened on the hike.

“The overall goal of the hike was opening up to each other, creating that team atmosphere, and getting comfortable in uncomfortable places,” he said.

Kennedy was one of the first to reach the top of the mountain. Teamwork and team bonding are important among the coaches and staff members of the wrestling team. They are proud to see their wrestlers taking the initiative to bond and do activities as a team.

“I thought it was great for team bonding and getting out for physical activities. It helps take your mind off of a lot of things that you might be struggling with,” said assistant coach Ryan Foutz.

As the final stretch was in sight, a couple hundred feet of elevation left to hike, the team kept moving and eventually reached the peak.

“We got to the top as a team and you looked back to see Rutland, Killington, and a little bit of Castleton. This is purely just because of how high up you are. It was cool experiencing this and also feeling the side of achievement when conquering a challenge like this,” Long said.

Once at the top, everyone just observed the natural beauty in front of them. Everyone was quiet and felt at peace for a little while.

“Me and a couple of members of the team talked about life, deeper than just thoughts



LOGAN BRUCE

VTSU wrestlers hike Killington’s peak earlier this semester.

about it. How no other team is doing this and how mentally the mountain challenges you,” Long said happily.

Kennedy said the hike also prompted chats about the upcoming season.

“The team talked about goals and what they planned to do for this upcoming season that is only weeks away,” Kennedy said. “We’re a powerhouse team that is expecting a monster season.”

Off-campus Living: The good, the bad, the ugly



A purchased putting green sits right in the middle of a VTSU Castleton students living room.

Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Walking into the upstairs apartment on Elm Steet, one will expect to get hit with the strong scent of a Pumpkin Spice Yankee Candle. It’s a welcoming space of earth toned throw pillows and fall patterned fuzzy blankets.

Artwork decorates the walls and the slanted ceilings with windows allow for warm rays of sunshine to brighten the place up.

It’s much different than the seemingly uniform dorm room.

Although campus life is one of the major selling points of VTSU Castleton and college in general, there usually comes a time in a student’s life where they transition from living on campus to living off campus.

But the décor isn’t the only thing that makes apartment living so special. There are many differences that are obvious between living on campus and having an apartment of your own, including access to food and cooking.

“A pro would be that we have a kitchen. We can cook. I think all my roommates and I love to be able to go grocery

shopping and cook and have actual meals. We do a lot for football Sundays. We like to do crockpot meals,” said Jade Jamieson, the current resident living in the apartment on Elm Street.

Although Jamieson likes the aspect of at-home cooking, others have different thoughts.

“I just miss, like, having my meal plan. Like Fireside points. I just miss Fireside points, really. And not having to drive to school, like driving to campus sucks especially for morning classes,” said Tyler Serrani.

There’s also a familiarity and level of privacy within the apartment that is not so easily acquired in the dorm living, students say.

Several dorms on campus have communal bathrooms, adding some mystery to a simple bathroom break.

Sometimes that mystery is unwelcomed.

“Like in the dorms, if I walked out, especially in Ellis I was in a communal bathroom. I’d walk out and I’d see like five people instantly and I’m like ‘alright I don’t want this,’” Jamieson said.

“But now I walk out here, and I know who I’m expecting. I know who I’m going to see and they know who they’re going to see so it’s nice,” she said.

The financial aspect is also something that must be considered when examining the two types of college living.

On-campus students have

their pick of Fireside and Huden, which is included in their meal plan. It’s easy to scan your Student ID and not acknowledge how much money it costs to have these options.

However, when living off campus, that cost is not so easily ignored.

“One time me and Reilly went to Shaw’s for eggs. Just eggs. We both spent like \$75. And all the stuff was gone like three days later,” said Sya Barnes. “I was like, this cannot be my life. Like constantly going to buy stuff and it’s always gone.”

On campus, there are also a ton of activities for students to constantly be involved in. There’s always a CAB event to attend, a play to see, or a game to watch. But living off campus, students find different ways to occupy their time.

“We’ve set up our own golf course in our apartment, Jamieson said.

“My roommates are big into golfing so they have cups that are holes, and our apartment is kind of slanted so it’s kind of weird because the ball will roll back,” she said

Students living off campus are also exposed to a different side of Castleton, including taking part in activities in the town.

“One day me, Reilly and Hannah were sitting in the living room and we heard noise so we looked out the window and

there were people playing in the band at Third Place. So, we went over and we had drinks,” Jamieson said.

People can have more freedom living off campus, without RA’s, they said.

“It’s also nice that we don’t have RA’s come knocking on our doors because we’re laughing a little too loud or watching a movie a little too loud,” Jamieson said.

Whiles Barnes and Jamieson are relieved there are no more RA’s, Barnes is also thrilled to not be disturbed by the frequent fire alarms.

“The fire alarms. God, I hated them,” she said.

Although it might be a little more of a costly experience, living off campus gives students a little bit more freedom and a different perspective of life in Castleton.

Being in the dorms is incredibly beneficial for underclassmen, but some students eventually find its time for a different scene.

“I feel like a lot of people say like ‘oh when you get an apartment, you aren’t going to see any of your friends, you aren’t going to be able to experience any of the normal college experience,’” Jamieson said. “But it’s like, now that I’m a senior, I’ve already experienced that for three years so it’s time to move on and experience something different and having an apartment is helping me do that.”



5 fall must-watch movies

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

As the leaves turn orange, red and yellow and the air drops to a cool crisp, we pull our wool sweaters out of our closets and replace sandals with boots and get ready for a season of movie watching.

I love movies, and entering fall and the spooky season calls for a few good movie recs.

There are thousands of lists with critically acclaimed horror movies that will leave you speechless for weeks.

I'm not particularly into that sort of thing. A little too masochistic for me.

During the fall season, I'm more inclined to enjoy something a little cozier, with less blood and such.

I'm also not planning on being pretentious with this list.

Let's save "Dead Poets Society" for another time. I'm here to have fun and not think a whole lot.

"When Harry Met Sally" is a classic fall movie. I watched it for the first time just recently (criminal, I know) and it encapsulated a perfect autumn, cozy romance.

The film follows Harry and Sally in their 10-year long friendship turned romance with a backdrop of gorgeous autumn imagery.

I couldn't make the trek to Central Park to see the foliage this year, so I got my fix via "When Harry Met Sally."

"Fantastic Mr. Fox" is another great fall movie.

Wes Anderson is a genius and has an eye for orange.

Everything from the fox's cozy, underground houses to the cider they steal just screams the fall season.

Wes Anderson movies don't exactly move at a speedy pace either, and when I think of fall, I think of slowing down and enjoying the things around me as the year comes to a close.

"Mystic Pizza" stars Julia Roberts in the '80s in a coastal town called Mystic.

How much more fall could we get?

The outfits and hair and setting of the quaint little town is perfect for a rainy fall day.

It's one of those films where I couldn't really tell you much about the plot. It just looked pretty.

And sometimes that's all that matters.

When it comes to the movies I like to watch during this season, I don't desire to be on the edge of my seat, clutching my blanket as if that will keep me safe from the horrors of some movie I'm forced to watch with my friends.

Not for me, no thank you.

"Lisa Frankenstein" is a newer release that I thoroughly enjoyed. It's as "scary" as this list is going to get.

I thought this film was hilarious and had a level of camp that I wasn't anticipating.

It's a romance between a girl, Lisa, and The Creature that she brings back to life and she helps retrieve some of the limbs he lost in the process.

This movie has some interesting twists and turns, and I immediately deemed it a fall favorite.

My last recommendation is "Practical Magic."

I just adore this movie. The soundtrack, the cast, the costumes, and the design are all top tier.

Basically, the plot consists of these two gorgeous witch sisters who kill a man with Stevie Nicks playing in the background.

Let's be serious. This is the epitome of fall.

Its witchy and fun, but not scary (my favorite). Plus, it always gives me good outfit inspiration.

These movies will leave you feeling absolutely fine. Not scared and not devastated (like any movie starring Robin Williams where he teaches young men lessons. Please I can't handle that kind of heartbreak).

Professors' band channels the '60s

By Ashtin Bowden
Castleton Spartan

Nearly every town in Vermont, no matter how big or small, values live music.

Whether a music festival, local jam session, or an evening at a local restaurant, Vermonters choose to share intimate parts of themselves through music. From the tops of the Green Mountains to the lows of the Champlain Valley, echoes of generational influences are heard to this day. In recognizing these richly diverse sounds, Castleton is honored to receive one of Vermont's everlasting echoes; The Green Brothers Band.

My first introduction to the band was a Friday in September at Third Place Pizzeria in Castleton, in which I sat down with two of the members, Philip Lamy and Andre Fleche, both professors on campus.

Lamy teaches Sociology, Anthropology, and Cannabis studies, while Fleche teaches History and serves as Faculty Representative.

I then discovered that current philosophy professor Brendan Lalor and retired professor Bob Bizek are also a part of the band and have an abiding history to this community.

The band's history spans over 30 years, which Professor Lamy went on to explain.

Naturally, the band has



CURTESY PHOTO

The Green Brothers Band, which includes VTSU Castleton professors, performs a tune.

evolved over time; members have retired, and multiple horn players occasionally accompany the band for larger events. Steve Cahil, Bob Bizek, and Philip Lamy were the original band members.

Lamy moved to Castleton in 1992. Coming from a musical family, he grew up playing in all types of bands and events to put himself through college. He quickly met his neighbor, Cahil, who was an excellent guitar player, singer and composer, and they began playing together. Along came Bizek, a bass player connected

through a mutual friend of the music scene.

It was Bizek on bass, Lamy on drums and percussion, Lalor on vocals, harmonica and guitar, Fleche on guitar, Dave McKenzie on trumpet, flugelhorn and percussion, and Harry Drum on saxophone, flute and percussion.

Soul music, psychedelic rock, The Beatles, Steely Dan, and The Grateful Dead are a few musical influences of their generation. The Green Brothers Band play jazz with a Latin influence and past sets include R&B, Reggae, Rock, cover

tunes, and originals.

When I questioned the origin of their name, I was met with a candid laugh and an explanation that goes back the baby boomer era; a time mixed with social justice movements, protests for peace, war on drugs and the never-ending expansion of social norms.

Lamy said the band's name alludes to cannabis and its effect on music culture, and pays homage to Vermont, the Green Mountain State. The forested beauty throughout the state paired with the appreciation of music in Vermont is celebrated and valued by the professors.

Fleche is the latest member to join the band and uses his love and appreciation of music as a tool when discussing history. Music gives a historical context to what a society felt at the time, what issues were relevant and provides anecdotal evidence of their conditions. Music is art and a continuous storyteller, and one style of genre can expand ideas for another.

His musical influences are deeply rooted in Chicago style Blues; BB King, Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton all serve as inspiration in Andre's musical career.

Lamy is deeply inspired by musical cultures and social movements.

Being a drummer, he is influenced by Afro beats, Latin music, Reggae and R&B. As

the Director of the Cannabis Studies Certificate Program, he has studied the connection between cannabis and music culture back in the 60s until present day.

We connected on the need for music education and accessible programming and touched on the threat of budget cuts to the music department during the VTSU merger. He emphasized the importance of music education for all ages.

"To be human is to be musical," says Professor Lamy.

It's this expression of self, and the connection felt when music is valued that enriches the human experience.

Local music is an integral part of the Vermont experience, which is something I felt during their performance.

I watched the band play and noticed members' subtle cues, prompting each other and communicating through the instruments. The band loves to give an audience a piece of what they experience when they play, and their feedback is very important. The audience indicates when they're on the right track and receiving the energy of the music in a positive way.

They receive the love of the song; they are inspired by what the musicians are presenting, and it feels like a breath of fresh air.



VTSU Castleton student Joe Vyvial is pictured with his grandparents holding a portrait he made them for their 50th anniversary, and recently recreated his grandpa's favorite photo of him and his brother as kids on a home-made tractor.



CURTESY OF JOE VYVIAL

Grampa's favorite photo

By Joe Vyvial
Castleton Spartan

Last semester, in my Intro to Painting class, I've asked my professor for a clean canvas. My hockey season was over, all the sudden I had more free time and I just felt like doing some art.

I put the canvas on the easel, and it stayed there for good couple of days. I needed an idea, something good. Later that week, I remembered that my grandparents were going to be celebrating 60 years of marriage that following summer,

and I thought it would be good to paint something for them.

I did portraits of them for their 50th year anniversary when I was 12.

This time, I decided to do two paintings, one for each. For my grandma, I did this big caricature-like portrait of her, which she loved, and found very funny but wouldn't let me post it here, ha ha.

For my grandpa, I decided to paint this photo that I knew he really loved and was really proud of. Back home in Czech, we meet up as a family for a lunch or just a coffee every

Sunday. And every now and then, it leads to going through old photos and reminiscing.

I remember my grandpa spending more time looking at this photo than the others. It was a photo of me as a kid learning how to drive his homemade tractor, with him and my younger brother on the back of the tractor, on our little farm.

To me, it was an ordinary photo, one of thousands.

To him, it was the perfect photo. A tractor he built all by himself years ago, which to us it is a piece of crap some-

times. There is always something wrong with it. But he always manages to fix it. It is his creation that he will never give up on. He will never get a new one, a much better one, that would save him hours and hours of time just by not repairing it as much like the old one.

But it's his and he is very proud of it – as he is of us, his grandchildren and the whole family. He's proud of passing on his experience and knowledge to the future generation and of the farm that has been providing for us for years.

He sees that photo almost

as a "summary" of some of his achievements.

I don't think I have ever been this excited for a painting. I've covered the whole canvas very quickly. Throughout the whole time painting it, I felt different than usual. I was very excited about it, and I just couldn't wait to finish it, so I could show it to them.

The painting had a big success. It made some of us tear up a little bit. Now it's framed on the wall in the living room, right next to the drawing I did for their 50th anniversary.

Bedazzling my dorm on a budget

By Carly Centeno
Spartan Contributor

As a girl, I always dreamed of my perfect dorm room and how pretty and put together it would look.

But realistically, all those adorable decorations off Dormify or any other website are not cheap for any college student. The decorations can be over \$100, and it could literally be a painting you could do yourself.

I learned from being at school for three years that the best dorm decorations are the ones you create yourself.

A popular trend recently in dorms are these bedazzled paintings of very simple things like a ticket from a carnival or a margarita glass, but on websites, these cost around \$50 to \$60, which is crazy. After doing the math, if you do it yourself, you'll save \$35, which is

totally worth it for a budgeting college student.

These are super easy to make. All you need is a small canvas of your choice, paint, Elmer's clear glue, mod-podge, and a bag of rhinestones. Then all you have to do is find an inspirational picture for your painting.

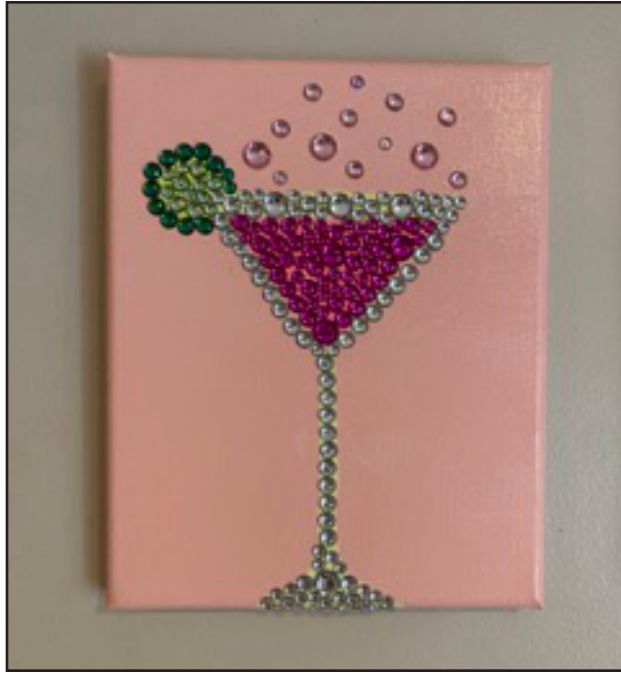
I recommend looking on Pinterest, and you can either trace or freehand the design on the canvas. Once you have the design, I recommend painting the background colors in similar colors to what rhinestones you'll be using to make it pop more.

The rhinestone is the hardest part of this whole painting because it is so tedious. I used tweezers for the smaller rhinestones and the bigger ones I was able to place with my fingers. I recommend putting the glue on the back of the rhinestone and holding it in place

for a good 10 seconds, but they still might move a little the more you place. Once done you must let the rhinestones and the glue dry before added the cover top of mod-podge. If you don't you will mess up the rhinestones.

After the glue dries, do a decent layer of mod-podge. This will make it more secure and also give the rhinestones an extra shine. Be sure to get the entire painting or else it will look wonky because one part will be shining and the other part will look matte.

Once it dries, you can hang up on the wall using a thumbtack to hold the canvas and boom all of your suitemates and friends will be begging you to make one for them. You can make anything you want for one of these pictures and they do add a great touch to any dorm room.



CARLY CENTENO

A rhinestoned art piece by Carly Centeno.

Swedish hockey player loves her roots

By Annika Nelson
Castleton Spartan

Moa Carlsson is a junior on the VTSU Castleton Women's Ice Hockey team and hails from Huddinge, Sweden, 10 minutes outside of the capital city, Stockholm.

And before coming to Castleton, Carlsson had never moved.

"My parents bought this tiny piece of land and then they built a house and it was done in May, and I was born in September. They basically built their almost dream house, but on a budget," Carlsson said with a chuckle.

While Sweden has fewer mountains than Vermont, one of the biggest similarities between the two places is the forests.

She said 68.7% of Sweden's land is covered by forests.

Although she enjoys Castleton, one of the biggest struggles for Carlsson is the feeling of being stuck on campus. At home, she can take public transport, walk, or bike anywhere.

"I'm so used to public transportation... I don't even ask my parents for a ride, I just hop on the train and I'm there. It's also much quicker than taking a car," she said. "In sixth grade, my school was an hour away and I got there myself just by taking public transportation."

The biggest challenge for



Moa Carlsson with her friends from the Castleton's women's hockey team visiting Sweden.

her coming to Castleton has been the language and customs.

In Sweden, there is a word called "truga" that closely translates to the word "coax" in English.

Carlsson explained why

she chose that example. For example, if someone offers you cookies and there is only one left, you have to say no at least twice, and when someone asks you a third time you can say yes.

"I remember my freshman



COURTESY MOA CARLSSON

year people would be like 'Hey do you want to come do this with us?' and I would say no, waiting for them to ask again," Carlsson said.

Sometimes they didn't.

When asked about what she does in Vermont that re-

minds her of home, Carlsson discussed her Scandinavian-style clothes and the Swedish Pancakes that she makes in the kitchen.

Over the summer, Carlsson had two of her teammates, Amanda Vaughn and Megan

Ward come to visit her in Sweden to get a taste of the Scandinavian life and celebrate her favorite holiday, Midsommar.

Midsommar is her favorite holiday because it's warm outside, she loves the family gathering aspect and there is a ton of delicious food, dancing, singing and drinking.

"I was really excited to show them where I grew up, especially Stockholm," she said.

She also spoke about how in Stockholm, the sun only goes down for around two hours during the summer.

Anyone who knows Carlsson knows that she loves candy, and one of her favorite things about being home is the candy.

To her surprise, when she got home for the summer, there was none of her favorite candy.

"Everyone was hating on America since it was a trend to eat Swedish candy and a lot of American candy stores bought it all... There were so many rumors going around and people went livid," Carlsson said.

As Carlsson navigates her journey at Castleton, she continues to blend her Swedish roots with Vermont. And she is not just a student-athlete at VTSU, but a daily reminder to embrace our roots and our new experiences.

Frederic:

Continued from page 3

He's known to be an escap"A lot of him being around people is being able to read his body language, because obviously, our connection with them is nonverbal," she said. She added that understanding his cues and acting on his behalf is a part of her job "as his partner."

Frederic can be rowdy and playful in group meetings, but when interacting with students in solo sessions, he takes a calmer approach. Moria says that when a student is in distress, he decides when and how to interact. Sometimes that looks like taking his time investigating, and other times, he sits with students to help them regulate.

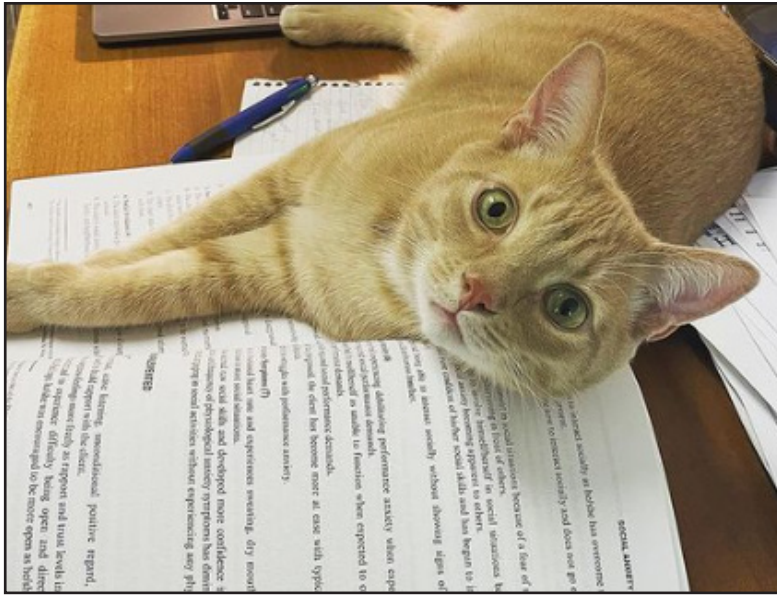
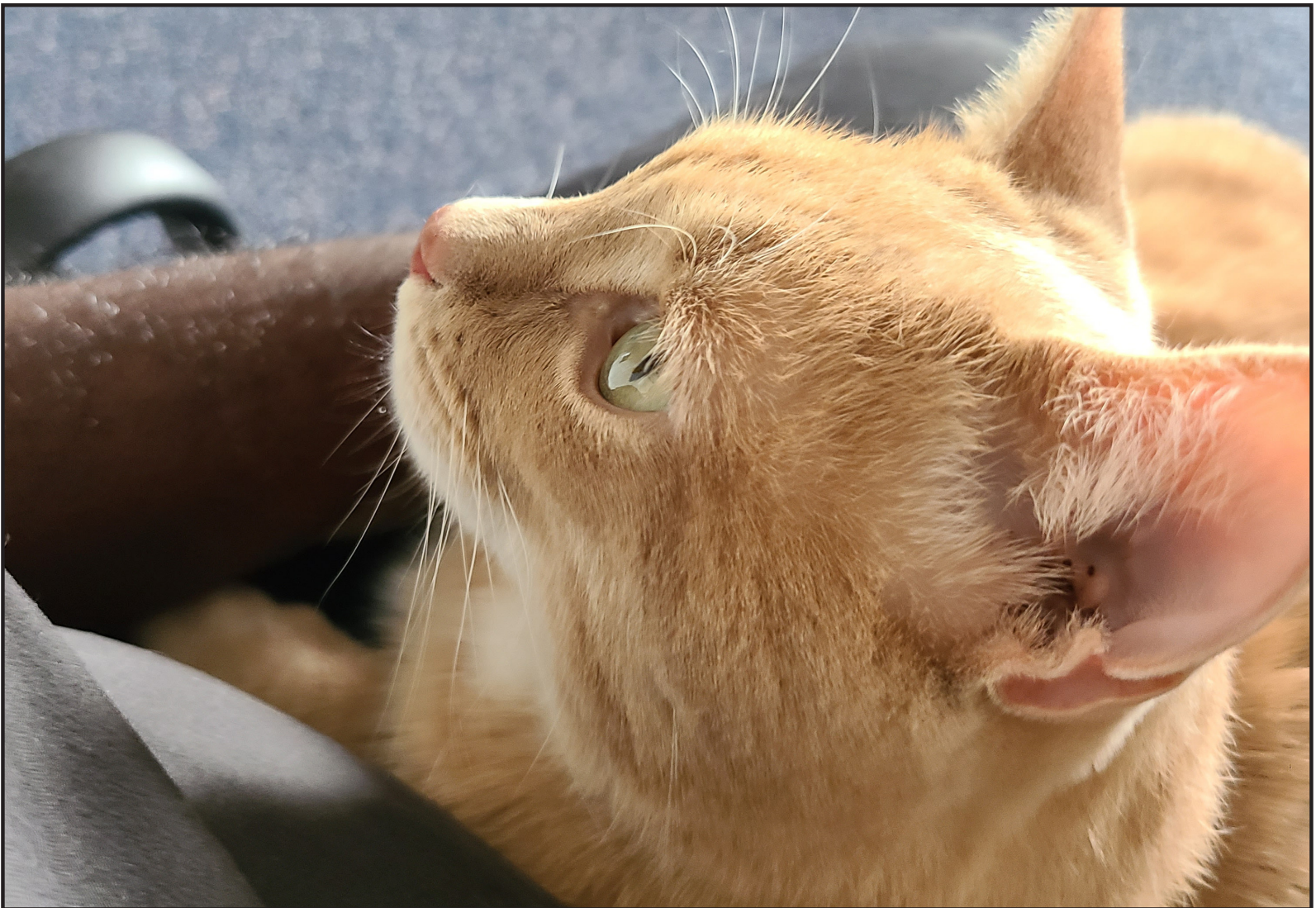
Before Frederic, Sheridan said that the Johnson Wellness Center had difficulty getting students to utilize their services. For many students, addressing mental health concerns can induce fear or anxiety. Interactions with Frederic may serve as a gateway through which the community gets comfortable with the Wellness Center, and mental health discussions in general.

While his presence is one factor for the increase in student interaction, McCarthy believes that mental health has grown less stigmatized within the past few years, as more of the students they interact with have greater knowledge about what mental health looks like.

"I think we are now working with a student population that has the vocabulary around mental health, has the experience with the mental health care system as well," McCarthy said.

She believes students are now more aware of their mental health needs, and are learning that they can access them through the Wellness Center. With that, and the recent spike in enrollment across the university, the demand for services is gradually increasing. In order to meet that demand, the Wellness Centers have had to get creative with the services and resources they offer, which has included the incorporation of therapy and service animal visits.

In April this year, Frederic won the Loudest 'Bork' competition for the Vermont National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), making him their new mental health pet ambassador. The contest was



COURTESY OF DAYNE BELL

Frederic the therapy cat at VTSU Johnson strikes a variety of poses.

a part of their "Make Some Noise. End the Silence VT" campaign, meant to encourage young people to share stories about their struggles with men-

tal health.

He ran against animals all across Vermont, including fully certified therapy animals. For a long time, he was neck in

neck with Xander, a multicolored Australian Shepherd that had been traveling as a therapy dog for over nine years. With support from students, friends,

and family, Sir Frederic rose to the top, encouraging students everywhere to "end the silence."

Unpaid:

Continued from page 1

Junior Becky Hannwhacker expressed frustration after being told she no longer has a job.

"I was told I was no longer eligible to work after I started working for five weeks. Then, I wasn't guaranteed I was getting paid. They finally sent an email saying I will get paid soon," Hannwhacker said. "It's still frustrating, though, because there was no communication. It took me weeks to get into the system, and then they told me I was not eligible."

Miscommunication seems

like a common theme, leading to frustration.

"If there are problems, and students or administration don't reach out and let me know, I can't help them get it signed," Perry said.

Multiple student employees in similar positions have been given the choice of not working, but many are now faced with a difficult decision. Teal added that students have been advised they can continue working throughout the delay.

"My supervisor has been accommodating. They claimed it was up to us if we wanted

to work because we would eventually be paid back. If we didn't want to work until it was repaired, we didn't have to."

Oliver Hope has worked in the communications department tech office since spring 2023.

"My boss Sam and I were both under the impression that since I had worked there before, I could just start working," Hope said. "However, when I tried to log my hours in UKG, it said I was 'suspended' from the job."

The situation at Vermont State University is compli-

cated and some students think it could be due to the recent merger with other state schools..

"Usually, it's pretty straightforward. This is the first time I've seen any issues. I think it's pretty telling since it's happening right after the transition and merger," Hope said.

While no formal statement has been issued linking the merger directly to student employment troubles, many students and faculty feel it has contributed to the current difficulties. The increased volume of paperwork and technical is-

sues in the UKG system has resulted in delays and confusion.

As Vermont State University works to fix the delays, administrators encourage students to remain patient and complete all mandatory onboarding requirements. Perry advised students to ensure their tax forms and contracts are correctly submitted and signed to avoid future complications.

Those who have finished the process but are still waiting for payment can receive reimbursement.

"You can complete a back pay form, and you will be paid

for every hour you work," Perry said.

While the University hopes to clear the contract backlog shortly, the process is still ongoing. Students and officials at Vermont State University are navigating the new terrain of student employment.

"I found it pretty demoralizing that I couldn't log my hours and didn't know when I would get paid. When I came into work on Wednesday this week, I thought if it's not fixed and I can't log my hours, I'm going to quit," Hope said.

A Q&A with field hockey grad assistant Alexis Ruiz

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

Q. Coming from the NEC, what was your initial outlook on the LEC conference?

A. It was a change, but I knew what I was coming into. And most importantly, before coming here I wanted to be a part of a team with a great culture and a team that I know cares about winning their conference. With them winning the LEC in 2022, I knew there was a desire and commitment. So yes, it is different, but coaching-wise I knew I'd be able to adjust.

Q. How do you feel about the team going into conference play?

A. I feel confident within the season. I think we've developed and learned a lot. Having those four out-of-conference losses helped us going into the conference. If we continue to play how we are playing right now, I do think we could make it into the playoffs. In the out-of-conference games, we stepped into our strengths. We are watching more film, and the girls are understanding of the things we have been struggling with. I do think West Conn was a great game where



Alexis Ruiz
we were listening to the coaching staff on what we saw from the outside looking in.

Q. Will you be more intense

and fixated on the details of the scheme now that conference play has begun?

A. I'll be more intense, and we as a team will be, just because we can continue getting better. I think now the film will be more in-depth. We will be watching conference teams adjusting to their play. Letting our players know what players to watch out for on the opposing teams and also not taking any team for granted.

Q. In your opinion, how have you done coaching this season? And what do you want to improve upon?

A. I knew coaching would

be an adjustment for me, but having those non-conference games twice a week under my belt helped a lot. I would say I need to improve on not getting frustrated with the flow of the game. I need to understand it takes time, especially with our first-year players. Understanding patience when it comes to how to coach players with a little experience and not getting frustrated. So, being more poised throughout practice and within games.

Q. What do you think the key is going to be in winning the LEC?

A. Staying consistent and

coming out the gate with enough intensity because that is what we have not done enough this season. So, you know, starting from warm up, just coming out strong. I think more film study and players adhering to what the coaching staff says they need to work on is going to be key. Staying consistent from here on out because we do not want to drop any more games because there were some games earlier this season, we could have won but did not start out hot.

Track team does more with less

Despite not having a track, team is growing and excelling

By Isabell Lanfear
Spartan Contributor

There's not a team that does more with less than the Castleton Track and Field team, as the absence of a track seems to do little to hinder the team's ability.

This year marks the 9th year of the Castleton track and field program, and Ian Sawtelle has been there since nearly the beginning.

Sawtelle had been the assistant coach at Castleton for six years and was recently promoted to head coach, making this his seventh year here at Castleton. He's seen the program change since he and previous head coach Jay Condon had taken over the program back in 2018.

Now, instead of only having two coaches, each event group has their own coach, giving them the specialization and coaching they need.

"I love coaching. I don't think there's been a time in history that good coaching has been needed more than it is now," he said.

The coaches' office has a cozy charm, filled with memorabilia from current and former athletes, such as a plastic princess crown with a printed image of Coach Sawtelle taped on.

"We really pride ourselves on making people change who they are as people, gaining that independence that a lot of this generation doesn't have, gaining that grit in life to overcome obstacles," Sawtelle said.

Sawtelle, who is the head coach as well as the throwers coach, dedicates his time between his new job as an investigator with the department of liquor and lottery, his home life, and being a track coach. It's a difficult balance, but one both he and Coach Mike Audette have nearly perfected.

Audette is the long distance coach of the track team, as well as the head coach of the cross country team. He had briefly taken up the role of head coach last season, however due to his new position as the principal of MSJ, his busy schedule got even busier so Sawtelle took up the position.

David Harvey was a previous athlete who broke numerous school records and is now the jumps coach.

The team also gained a brand new sprints coach, as former coach Austin Beaugard left. Replacing him is Caleb Lisai, who comes from a football background.

Sitting in the small coach's office, Sawtelle paused for a moment, choosing his words carefully.



Track coach Ian Sawtelle chats with team members, above left. Former team member Harry Leombruno-Nicholson readies his javelin, above right. Team members pose after a meet, below.

"I have a goal in mind of what I want this program to look like before I'm done," he said.

He went on to explain that means consistent numbers, improved performance, and more qualifications in the LECs as well as New Englands. Last year, the team saw many successes with athletes such as Kalynn Stevenson, Taylor Ross, Carter Mackey and Harrison "Harry" Leombruno-Nicholson, all top-three finishers.

This year's team, which faced the loss of several key players including Leombruno-Nicholson, who was the national qualifier in javelin for the team, seems to have an open position for a team leader.

"The person Harry was, the teammate he was, we're not going to be able to find that replacement anytime soon," Sawtelle said.

Leombruno-Nicholson, whose record throw of 60.45 meters (or 198 feet) got him qualified for both New Englands and Nationals, was a key player on the track team.

"Everybody loves Harry right, and he was a big leader. Everyone listened to Harry, so it kinda opens up a leadership spot as a thrower," said Sidiki

Sylla, a second-year shot put thrower.

"It's hard to replace a national qualifier," Audette in agreement.

Sitting in a computer lab were Kalynn Stevenson and Katelyn Yerdon, throwers and friends on the track team. It was late so there was nobody there, which was a good thing, as cackling could be heard.

"I was gonna go to Plattsburgh," said Stevenson when talking about why she chose to attend Castleton and join the track team.

"I was like really not wanting to come here at all" she said, clasping her hands together. "I was really going down to it. I was like, Coach Ian, he gave me the attention I needed y'know, without the constant messaging and stuff. I was like you know what, he actually cares."

Others agreed it was the recruiting ability of the coaches that initially drew them to the team. Yerdon said Sawtelle's recruiting was top notch. Stevenson had also said that she had joined the team due to his recruiting. His tactics for recruiting have also evolved. Now Sawtelle posts photos and videos of the team on Instagram, to help reach more ath-

letes and gain attention.

Yerdon and Stevenson had been recruited the year prior without all the social media posting, and it seems as though this year had gone well for recruiting as well, but it's not without its difficulties.

Track and Field is a different sport and is defined by the NCAA as a non-traditional sport. It's also the only college sport at Castleton that has to recruit both men and women and it's not just separated by gender, but by event as well. These factors, as well as the absence of a track, contribute to the difficulty of recruiting.

However, despite these hardships, the coaches still reach out to hundreds of athletes and successfully recruit a plethora of them.

"This year we have a team high ever, I think of like 45 or something like that. Trying to get 70 next and try and make it like look, we need a track," Sylla said.

"We still doubled our team," Yerdon added.

The absence of a track at Castleton often poses problems for the athletes to practice.

"There's only so much we can do in our gym," Sawtelle said. "Facilities absolutely do hamper us on our ability."



CASTLETON SPORTS



The team usually practices within Shape gym, sharing the gym with other teams like wrestling and baseball. Senior member of the team and long distance runner Jon Hendley said that it's unfortunate that they have to train in the gym. The runners especially have more difficulty with the absence of a track. The team, more specifically the sprinters, jumpers, and javelin throwers must travel to Fair Haven High School to use their outdoor track facilities. While Castleton does have throw circles for the throwers, they are not maintained and the cage around the hammer circle is definitely not up to standard.

"More people would know

about the program," said Stevenson about having a track.

"Having a track or hosting a meet could bring in a lot of money for the school," Yerdon said.

"I don't think there is a program in the Little East that does more with less than we do," Sawtelle said when asked if he believes the absence of a track affects the team's performance.

"I think it's all about how we have success even without that," Audette said. "You can still be very successful here, without having a facility on campus."

Men's soccer team is back to winning ways after up and down start

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

This 2024 season has been up and down for the men's soccer team. The guys have played six games in the past few weeks, four of which were in the Little East Conference. Because they influence standings and whether a team will qualify for the playoffs, these games are crucial for teams. The Spartan men are currently in sixth place on the leaderboard and are hoping to move up as they play.

On Oct. 2 they matched up with Keene State at Dave Wolk stadium. It was a tense showdown and ultimately led to a 1-0 loss. The Owls secured victory early, by netting the only goal in the 14th minute. The match was a fierce battle,

particularly in the second half, where the Spartans dominated possession and outshot Keene 10-0. Despite several close attempts, including a near-miss from first-year Jacques Alfani in the final moments, the Spartans couldn't find the back of the net, leaving them frustrated as they searched for an equalizer.

The Spartans then defeated Eastern Connecticut State University 1-0 on Sunday, marking their first Little East Conference win after an intense match. In the eleventh minute, Tanner Curtis scored the game-winning goal after Adolphe Alfani's shot rebounded. In addition to ending Castleton's eight-game losing streak, this victory was the program's first ever against Eastern Connecticut.

Both teams recorded eight

shots in the evenly contested match. Xander Berthiaume, a rookie goalie, had an outstanding game, saving all four of the shots that were on goal for his second shutout of the year. Liam Cramer and Wyatt Robbie drove the Spartans' defense, which held firm as Eastern Connecticut tried to equalize, allowing Castleton to win.

"We believed that overall, we played strong defense and cut down on their opportunities in front of goal. We had excellent defensive communication in the second half, which prevented them from capitalizing," Wyatt said.

In-between playing Plymouth, the men played Paul Smiths College and VTSU Johnson. They emerged victorious in each of these games, which weren't particularly challenging for them as a team.

The team lost to Plymouth State 2-1 in Little East Conference game on Saturday in a tightly fought match. The Panthers scored the game-winning goal in the 73rd minute to give them their first conference win. Plymouth dominated the first half of the match at Ar-old Field, taking eight of their 13 shots before the end of the half. Xander Berthiaume, a rookie goalie, made a number of important saves that kept the score tied as the teams went into halftime.

Despite the Spartans' excellent second-half performance, Plymouth broke the tie in the 54th minute with a strike into the upper left corner. Alfani took advantage of a deflected shot from Toby Ritzkowski in the 61st minute, moving past a defender before firing home to equalize, prompting a swift

response from Castleton. Castleton tried for a go-ahead goal as they gained momentum. But just twelve minutes later, Plymouth's goal changed the momentum, giving the Panthers the victory and left the Spartans reeling as they continue their conference quest.

To finish off this weekend, the men gained a 3-0 victory against UMass Dartmouth in a strong effort at Dave Wolk stadium on Saturday in Little East Conference action. Twenty minutes into the game, Matt Spiller gave the team the lead with a strike into the top-left corner of the goal after Adolphe Alfani had set him up.

Junior Matt Spiller said that "This goal gave them just what they needed to set us up for our second LEC win of the season," said junior Matt Spiller. "We hope to continue

this so we can make playoffs this year!"

The Spartans kept up the pressure, and Castleton led 2-0 at the half thanks to a goal from first-year Nate Wood, who was assisted by Jacques Alfani. Seth Dube took advantage of a one-on-one opportunity in the second half, and the drive continued. With 35 minutes remaining, a Corsairs defender was sent off for a foul, stripping UMass Dartmouth of a player. With just over 30 minutes left, the Spartans swiftly capitalized on their numerical advantage when Dube scored again during a breakthrough, increasing the lead to 3-0.

JP Maul took over in goal with 14 minutes remaining in the game.

Women’s soccer continues roller coaster ride of season

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

Let’s catch you up on the women’s soccer team. They played Keene State, a conference opponent in their first match since we last checked in with the girls. Emma Ezzo in the cage had 17 stops for another shutout. Maggie Mckearin had a pair of goals continuing to lead the charge offensively, and senior Rylee Pepin recorded two helpers. Mallory McKenna also scored her first goal of the season. A big bounce back win, in conference play for the team.

The Spartans then traveled again to play Eastern Connecticut State, a strong conference opponent. They fell short in this effort, taking a 3-0 loss. The Warrior’s goals all came in the first half, and despite a strong second half our Spartans couldn’t find their way back.

Out-of-conference opponent Westfield State was next

up on the schedule, and we came ready to play for this MASCAC powerhouse. An early goal for the Owls in the third minute put them up early. The girls kept composure though, and Maggie scored her eighth of the year to tie the game. Rylee Pepin followed up in the first half with another marker to take a 2-1 lead in front of the home crowd. The Spartans did a good job holding off the Owls pressure in the second half but a late goal from the Owls resulted in a 2-2 tie.

Another conference match against a rival in Plymouth took place on Oct. 12. The match was an exciting defensive battle, those are not mutually exclusive. A heated, chippy, and back and forth match took place deadlocked for 84 minutes. Maggie Mckearin who is putting together quite the year finally broke through for the Spartans when set loose for a breakaway on a stolen pass. Her fifth game winning goal secured them the win in

their Stroke Awareness game at home.

This past weekend we traveled to play UMass Dartmouth for their sixth conference match. Another hard fought deadlock took place for nearly 70 minutes, going back and forth. Alexis Billings made her way back in the goal column and scored first for her eighth of the year to take the lead. The Corsairs unfortunately responded well late scoring in the 77th minute and 84th to eventually win 2-1. This loss leaves the Spartans 3-3 in conference play thus far.

The girls hit the road again the next day to play Williams, one of their strongest opponents. We’ll keep this game recap short. They fell handily to Williams 10-0, in an offensive onslaught.

Check back in for the next issue, where you’ll read about how the girls finish out the regular season and position themselves for the post season.



PHOTO FROM CASTLETONSPORTS
Freshman forward Megan Carson getting ready to receive a pass.

Spartans stunned by Plymouth State

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

On a sunny Saturday evening with the Fall leaves falling the Spartans were kicking off against Plymouth State at Dave Wolk Stadium which saw the Spartans fall 21-6 and move to a 3-3 record on the season.

“It was definitely a tough game all the way around but dwelling on it won’t change a thing. Time to get back to work this week and get back on track Saturday at Fitchburg,” said captain Kevin McDonough.

The Spartans found themselves down quick to start off the game when the Panthers rattled off two quick plays to go up 7-0 on their first possession of the game.

McDonough led the Spartans defense to a few stops to close out the first quarter however, the second quarter would be a busy quarter for Plymouth as they would end up moving the ball quick and efficiently to go up 21-0 before the Spartans had an answer back.

The Spartans found themselves on the board with just over two minutes remaining in the half when Wes Cournoyer led the Spartans down the field with a six play, 75-yard drive that was capped

off with a Caesar Williams, five-yard touchdown reception to get the Spartans on the board. Unfortunately, the extra point would be missed, and the Spartans would go into the half down 21-6.

After halftime, it was all defense for both teams as each team shutdown the other team’s offense leaving the entire second half scoreless.

The Spartans were led by Cournoyer on offense with 241 passing yards and a touchdown, as well as Leonard Brice with nine receptions for 116 receiving yards. On the defensive side of the ball McDonough led the team with 12 total tackles as well as a forced fumble.

“Offensively we just gotta finish drives. I need to find a way to come up with points once we’re in the redzone. Our defense is good enough where we know we just gotta score a few touchdowns a game and we’ll have a chance to win any game,” said Cournoyer.

The Spartans look to get back on track on the road against Fitchburg State on Oct 26 for another conference match up. This match up could end up having major implication in the standings and could move them to sole possession on fourth place in the conference.



PHOTOS FROM AVERY BOUCHARD
On the top Wes Cournoyer escaping the pressure in the pocket to extend the play. The offensive line, bottom left, gets set to snap the ball to kick off the drive. Kevin McDonough, bottom right, adding another tackle onto his Division III leading 82 tackles on the season.

A Q&A with field hockey head coach Emily Douglas

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

Q. Coming into the year, you guys were picked to finish 4th in the LEC. How do you feel that impacted the team?

A. I think it did impact the team. Last year, when we were picked to finish first, I didn’t have a good feeling about it because it’s not that we felt we couldn’t win it, but I think it sometimes just gets to your head, the pressure of, you know, everyone expects you to win. And this year I feel like being placed middle the pack was fair because that is where we finished last season. So, it’s not like it’s an insult to us or anything like that, but I do think that having us in fourth just kind of shows that it can go either way, right? I was actually kind of relieved when they put us at 4th because the pressure of being at the top can sometimes get to people, even if you think it doesn’t.

Q. How do you feel about the team going into conference play?

A. I mean, of course we have our leaps and bounds, but overall this team is really talented and there’s just so many things that we can bring to the table. It’s just making sure that we have consistently. These last couple games we’ve figured out how to be a cohesive unit and be more consistent altogether. So, I think we’ve kind of found our groove, which is really exciting and it’s kind of perfect timing now that we’re in conference play.

Q. What teams do feel will be your biggest competition in the LEC?

A. Keene State. We play them home on Tuesday night which is exciting. I think there are other teams that I still think are a threat. But I will say Keene is going to be the biggest competition we’ll have within the conference. Keene has a lot of different goal scor-

ers, which we also do. And I think that’s exciting, but it’s also really hard to defend that, because there’s not just one threat. You don’t have that one top scorer, so you have to shut down their entire forward line and midfield. I think they’re really scrappy as well. We’ve been watching a lot of their film and we also see a lot of weaknesses that we can exploit when we do see them and it’s just capitalizing on those and bringing up our strengths. At the same time. If I’m being honest, I just think that we’re a very equally matched team with the same strengths and weaknesses. So, it could go either way and that’s why I think it’s going to be our biggest competition.

Q. Do you believe the LEC is stacked with a handful of good teams or do you believe the conference is wide-open?

A. I believe the conference is wide open this season. I mean, of course there’s



Emily Douglas

a couple teams that are solid, good teams, but I would say the conference has been very unpredictable this year. Like USM, for example, was pre-season picked number one, lost to East Conn last week, who was picked to finish in the bottom tier of the LEC this season.

So, like, you just don’t know what’s gonna come, depending on who shows up on what day.

Q. What is going to be the key to continuing this hot streak you guys are on right now? A. I feel like we’ve kind of figured it out, which is good. The resilience part of it. I will say the way that we’ve started this season of coming out and the other team scoring on us first and then us still coming out and beating them. Like we’ve gone from a 2-0 deficit to East Conn last week, who was picked to finish in the bottom tier of the LEC this season. So, like, you just don’t know what’s gonna come, depending on who shows up on what day.

Q. Will preparation and intensity increase now that you’re in conference play? If so, how will that look?

A. So, film is going to be more important when it comes to conference play. At the beginning of the season, we don’t really emphasize a lot of team film as much as we do now because we’re focused on ourselves more than the opponent. But once we get into the conference play, I feel like we’ve transitioned more into focusing on our opponent because there’s always room to grow. We’ve kind of figured out our rhythm and groove and structure on the field so we just have to figure out how our group will work against the other teams. But other than that, the same intensity and preparation goes into every practice whether it’s a Middlebury that we’re playing or it’s like a bottom-seed team, we act as if it’s the same for everybody.



NEWS

Field hockey team bonds with local goats.

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ARTS

Study abroad student displays ceramic art inspired by South Korea.

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Spartans are peaking as they head into playoffs.

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Castleton, Vermont

CASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, November 8, 2024

VTSU deals with nursing growth

By Samuel Zinner
Spartan Contributor

Despite the quiet atmosphere of Stafford Hall, there are big shifts in academic programming taking place on the second floor.

Upon opening the double doors at the top of the stairs, this became obvious. The second floor hosts a bustling nursing program, classroom and laboratories busy with student and faculty activity.

Helen Papeika, chair and program director for Castleton's nursing program, was enthusiastic to chat about the program among the shelves of equipment and boxes of education materials overflowing in classrooms.

"Growing is complicated," Papeika explained, "We're going through the multiple steps of accreditation, and the state has strict guidelines they want us to follow."

She also described how challenging it is to push and pull with the state over changing their rules of accreditation while conforming to the national standard. It is a necessary step in expanding, though, primarily for hiring new employees.

Accreditation is a process every nursing school must endure. Caitlin Stover, dean for the School of Nursing, was happy to describe what accreditation was in relation to VTSU.

"The purpose of accreditation is to ensure that you're delivering a high quality and effective educational product to your students. It's not just a matter of filling seats, but instead filling seats with successful students, and retaining them," she said.

In reference to the staff, accreditation asks for nurses to meet strict requirements before they can teach.

"The accreditors want your faculty experienced with the right credentials for the areas where they are teaching," Stover said.

See "Nursing" on page 6.

Walking with purpose

Hundreds participated in annual breast cancer walk

By Reilly Marsden
Spartan Contributor

A sea of pink flooded the town of Castleton on Oct. 20. Shirts, bracelets, ribbons and even a hot tub were bright pink to commemorate and raise awareness for people impacted by breast cancer.

As Breast Cancer Awareness Month comes to a close, the Vermont State University Castleton Campus welcomed the public to participate in the annual "Making Stride Against Breast Cancer" fundraising walk. The four-mile loop attracted individuals from varying backgrounds: survivors, those who had lost loved ones to the disease, and people who simply wanted to make a difference.

"Seeing all the people come together—everybody is so involved. It's a great day," Cathy Rotondo said.

As the team captain of "Strumming for Strides," Rotondo organized a group of ukulele players to serenade participants as they walked through town. She believes the sense of community this event provides is a crucial reminder to offer support whenever possible.

Her grandmother, mother, and sister survived cancer, and their journeys prompted Rotondo to involve herself in fundraising. She advocates for early detection and frequent screenings, and she hopes accessible treatment becomes standard.

The Poultney Cheer Team made an appearance too, sporting pink pom poms and bows. The team smiled through stunts and cheers, excited to raise awareness while taking part in an activity they love.

Haylee Pellistri, a sophomore who cheers for Poultney expressed gratitude for the ability to be a part of making a difference through cheer.

"Both sides of my family have had breast cancer, and

coming together as a community to help those who have fought means a lot," she said.

Emotions were heightened and tears were shed as people remembered their personal journeys with the disease. Susan Ahearn, a survivor of 14 years, briefly recalled her experience, focused on the support she received during treatment.

"[The walk] just shows how much people care," said Ahearn while choking up with tears in her eyes.

As someone who has participated in the cancer walk since its inception, Ahearn saw the turnout of the event increase. She helped to foster the sense of pride and community of survivors.

"If you say, 'Breast Cancer' people just say 'Ok, sign me up.' It just shows how many people are willing to help," Ahearn said.

Allen Pools and Spas showed its support by donating a bright pink hot tub to be raffled. "Spas for a Cause" is the slogan the company adopted to champion support for cancer awareness. According to its website, Allen Pools and Spas donate \$100 to Making Strides Against Breast Cancer for every hot tub, Endless Pool, and Sauna purchased in the month of October.

Kimberly Ghigliotti, an employee of Allen Spas, spoke of her motivations for working the event. One was personal, but the other centered around the prevalent sense of community and the opportunity to raise money.

"I've worked at Allen for a long time. We spent two months raising money for Making Strides Against Breast Cancer," said Ghigliotti.

When asked to provide a piece of advice to someone currently affected by the disease, she said one word.

"Fight."



REILLY MARSDEN AND MICHELE ALMEIDA

Community members and students took to the streets to fight back against breast cancer.

Q&A with Chief Diversity Officer Paul Yoon



By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

Paul Yoon is the new VTSU Chief Diversity Officer who recently sat down with the Castleton Spartan for an interview. He is originally from Manhattan, New York and moved to Vermont in 2013. He currently resides in Essex, Vermont with his wife, Jenny, two kids, and a cat and dog.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Q. Your most recent position was as senior advisor for Inclusive Excellence at the University of Vermont. What did the responsibilities of this role include and how has it informed your approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and social justice?

A. One of the things I was responsible for was the con-

vening and organization of what UVM calls their University Diversity Council, or UDC, and the UDC is a body that comprises all the bigger units on campus, so all of our colleges, all of the nonacademic units that are kind of on the bigger side of things. It's this body that meets monthly that comes together to execute the university's Inclusive Excellence action plan...One of the big things I did was to meet with a lot of different members from all across the university community to help them implement those plans and that is, what I think, going to be a big factor in implementing some sort of a change management plan here at VTSU.

Q. What initially drew you to education and DEISJ work and what drives your passion today?

A. When I was a middle school student, right before I started 8th grade, my biological father left our family, and he did so by leaving a note on the door and disappearing, and that was a really, really challenging, traumatic experience for me. I am so grateful for the teachers that I had at that time, many of whom had known me since I was a kindergarten student, and they rallied around me, they loved me, they sup-

ported me, and they literally stepped in at that time as surrogate parents and caregivers. That experience has stuck with me ever since and has led me to this career as an educator. In short, I wanted to be the kind of educator that they were to me, particularly during that very, very challenging time in my life.

On the other side of things, I was a second-year undergraduate student, and I had the opportunity to take the class titled "The History and Development of Racism in the United States of America," and that class literally changed the direction of my life and my understanding of U.S. history, systems of oppression, and most importantly, it challenged me to think about how I would contribute and how I would be a part of the solution that I and many others wanted to see.

Q. What's your go-to comfort food?

A. Unfortunately this is not available here in Vermont. It's a Korean soft, tofu stew, and it is my favorite comfort food in the world. It's called Kimchi sundubu-jjigae. But, because we are blessed here in Vermont with such amazing Vietnamese food, a close proxy to that these days for me has been pho ("fuh"), so when I'm not feel-

ing well especially, and I want something that's warm and is gonna hit that spot, pho has been a really good stand-in.

Q. What's your impression of VTSU as you travel the campuses, and how many campuses have you been to?

A. The first immediate impression is beautiful. Fall is my favorite season, and over the past few weeks, Vermont has been really showing off in a pretty specular kind of way. After this coming Tuesday (11/5), I will have been to all, at least, of the five main campuses, and then I at some point will try to make it to the Killington site and some of the smaller ones as well.

Q. What's been your impression of students and teachers?

A. Great. One of the things I've been really, really grateful for over the past week or so is the amount of enthusiasm that students and the faculty and the staff I've spoken to have for me being in this position and the support they have for DEISJ. That, for me, has been the most notable thing.

Q. In your expertise, what does it mean to have strong DEISJ on a campus and broadly, how is that achieved?



PROVIDED BY PAUL YOON

Paul Yoon with his family.

A. (There are) four levels of the different "isms" (Racism, sexism, etc). The four levels are the individual level, like what's going on inside of oneself. The second level is the interpersonal level, for example, this interaction that we're having right now. Then there's the institutional level. In VTSU's context, you could think of it as the entire university. In this case you could maybe break it down by the individual campuses as well. And then there's the fourth level, which is the system level. In this context, it would be the Vermont State College System. You need to pay attention to all four of those levels and you also need

to make sure that each of those pieces are being addressed in the ways they need to be addressed.

The piece that is really critical for VTSU is that I am one individual. I am in the process of hiring a second person to be in this office. What is going to be really important is working with teams of people who are committed to this in all corners of the university community.

Yoon encouraged students to reach out to him at paul.yoon@vermontstate.edu or diversity@vermontstate.edu about any questions, concerns, or ideas pertaining to DEISJ.

Spartan editors weigh in on their presidential choices

Editors of the Spartan before Tuesday's election talked about what to do as far as endorsing a candidate. In the end, they decided they would offer their thoughts individually and their reasons behind their decisions. The Spartan was printed after election day.

This presidential election, I am voting for Kamala Harris.

To preface, I don't enjoy the way the two-party voting system is set up. I believe it polarizes our country and reduces the number of perspectives, which in return forces voters into polarizing extremes. It pressures voters to settle for "lesser evil" choices, which often sidelines nuanced issues. It discourages independent or third-party voices, limiting true representation and often leading to voter passiveness.

With that said, I am voting for Kamala Harris. The biggest reason I am voting for Kamala is because of her commitment to addressing climate change. In my opinion, climate change is one of the most pressing issues we face today.

Harris' policies show she supports a transition to 100% clean energy by 2050, investing heavily in renewable resources to make that vision a reality. Her policies prioritize environmental justice by protecting vulnerable communities that bear the end of pollution and climate-related risks. Harris not only supports the fight against climate change but also sees it as an opportunity to build a more sustainable and equitable economy.

The way Harris stands for women's rights also strongly influences my support. She has been an advocate for gender equality and for elevating women to leadership positions, which allows for more diverse voices in decision-making.

Something that really influenced my endorsement of Harris is honestly influenced by the way she talks about women versus the way Trump does. He has made numerous derogatory remarks about women's appearances and belittles female leaders by calling them "nasty" and using racist comments like "Pocahontas" to demean their achievements and degrade their character.

Harris' advocacy for women's rights and equality stands in contrast to Trump's disparaging approach. Trump has faced allegations from over two dozen women, all claiming instances of sexual misconduct and was seen recorded on camera by "Access Hollywood" boasting about grabbing women inappropriately without consent.

Harris' commitment to

addressing Trump's negative treatment of women and holding him accountable for his actions solidifies my vote.

Harris has been clear in her stance against this type of behavior, viewing it as unacceptable from any leader. By voting for her, I'm supporting a candidate who values respect, equality, and the empowerment of women.

-Em Ely

In this presidential election I have voted for Kamala Harris. I am pretty young, and I don't understand everything so I feel hesitant to speak up on anything because I feel there will always be someone who knows more and can articulate their knowledge better than I can. That being said, as I prepared for this election, I wanted to keep things simple with who's values align most with mine. Of course, I care about my life and the lives around me and how they will be affected and I found that I was more in tune with Harris's goals than with Trump's.

Her advocacy for Women's Rights is a huge reason I am voting for her. I think it has been far too long that women's healthcare gets swept under the rug and I think as a woman she will be way more conscious of how her decisions affect the women in the nation. Not only do I stand with her thoughts on Women's Rights but also on topics of human rights and gender equality. The way in which she speaks about women is very empowering compared to her opponent, which is something I found extremely admirable. I personally would not want to vote for someone who resorts to childish insults when it comes to a debate. With Harris as president, I would feel noticed and safe. Much more so than with her opponent.

I also greatly appreciate the way she addresses the younger generations. She always says that she loves Gen Z because they are so impatient. I love the way she values the minds of the youth. She understands that younger generations are the future and wants to know what we think and want and she seems to support us. The choice of who to vote for was always pretty obvious for me, personally. My values align much more with Harris and for the first time in a long time I am excited to see what the President will do for our country. For the first time it doesn't feel like I'm just voting for the lesser of two evils.

-Jess Emery

This election has been in-

credibly difficult for me to navigate, namely because of my faith as a Christian. The last thing I want to do is misrepresent the faith that transformed my life for the better a year and a half ago, as I know it can for anyone. This election, only about half of Christians are projected to vote, meaning 104 million Christians are likely to sit out the presidential election, according to research findings from Arizona Christian University released in October.

Although I do agree with some of Trump's policies, I understand he is not representative of the Christian disposition. I don't necessarily believe in every allegation made against Trump, since I believe every claim should be investigated individually. To this point, I've recently come across widespread stories from Jeffrey Goldbergh at The Atlantic that are reliably discredited or based entirely on anonymous sources, which I hardly believe is good reporting. However, I do condemn many statements from him towards many people groups, and statements made by supporters of the campaign, such as the incredibly vulgar jokes made by comedian Tony Hinchcliffe at the recent Madison Square Garden rally, to name one.

I feel torn between my alignment in some respects with the Republican party and Trump's problematic past and disposition. I also have not seen any advocacy for religious freedoms by Harris either. Despite staying up for the past three nights until 2 a.m. watching debates and Christian perspectives, I can't give a solid endorsement. The message I do want to share though, is that Christian's should take this matter to God, inform themselves, and vote according to their convictions. And we're called to pray for our leaders and country, no matter who it is!

-Pearl Bellomo

The 2024 election has brought to light the extreme division of our nation and serves as a reminder of the difficulties of interacting with one another. I know that myself and many people in this country see us caught in a national split during the present election season, making it harder and harder to see things from the same perspective. It's difficult to ignore the ongoing hostility and violence that appear to dominate conversations about the nation's future, regardless of which candidate we support.

I'm voting for Kamala Harris and Tim Waltz this year because I think her background and viewpoint may lead us to



JOE VYVIAL

Artist Joe Vyvial depicts the Vermont changing of the seasons.

growth and unification. My views and thoughts for a more equitable and inclusive future are in line with Harris's views on topics like healthcare, education, and climate change. Even in the face of obstacles, I respect her perseverance and her history of advocating for change. Many young people, who seek a government that is dedicated to practical solutions and represents a range of experiences, find connections in Harris' visions. As a woman, I also fear for the future where my reproductive rights are not protected. I fear of the thought of me, my future daughter, my sister, my best friend or my mother not being able to get the resources they need one day.

Although I respect her leadership, I am also aware that other people have similar passion for their candidates and believe that different tactics or ideas will benefit the country more. It's disheartening to observe that this intensity often leads to separation in our country rather than encouraging candid communication. This division has only gotten worse due to the increase of false information, discussion

forums, and online rivalry. Social media plays a crucial part in any election for getting candidates' words out, but it's also an outlet for verbal harassment to both parties, giving the impression that we can only value our own point of view.

Regardless of the result, I believe everyone should remember that we are all working for a better future for this country as we approach this election. The only way to bridge the gaps that threaten to split us apart is to listen to one another, even if we have different ideas about how to get there. Ultimately, what counts is that we strive for a country that respects and values the voices of all people.

-Maddie Lindgren

When it comes to presidential elections, I tend to not really care too much at the end of the day. I have never voted and didn't vote this year. Personally, I don't really care all that much about politics as a whole, but I also don't feel as though my vote means all that much at the end of the day due to the ultimate vote being decided by the electoral college.

Now, in some swing states, a singular vote has more weight than in a state that is already known to be red or blue.

I personally just feel that it is not the end of the world if my vote is cast. I do not pay attention to politics in the slightest nor do I have any desire to based on how divided it makes the country. At the end of the day, does a vote matter? In my opinion, kind of, but it just gives the electoral college an idea of what the majority of a state wants in terms of a vote.

One thing that does not sit right with me about the whole voting process is that the electoral college in most states does not have to follow the popular vote in that state, but they almost always do.

Even though they always do end up going with the popular vote, something about it just doesn't sit right with me that only 29 states have laws that bind their electors to the popular vote results and that there isn't a federal law or any provisions on a national level that require electors to vote with the popular vote.

-Stone Stelzl

The Payne of losing Liam

Death of One Direction star rekindles childhood memories

Seven year-old me was the definition of a big time Directioner.

My room was plastered with multiple posters on the pink and blue walls. Niall, Zayn, Liam, and Loui all had individualized pictures right next to my bed, while Harry watched over my sister and me while we slept.

He was tacked to the middle of our bedroom ceiling.

I had One Direction Converse that matched my best friend's.

My backpack had the band's group picture laminated on the front with several keychains that shared the same theme.

Our white Lincoln Navigator was home to the band's "Take Me Home" album that lived in the CD-Player compartment, and the raggedy nightgowns with those five beautiful faces, sat crammed in my dresser drawers unless I was wearing them.

They were the focus in every picture from my childhood.

I could recite the scripts of each music video word-for-word and acted them out while the white corded headphones strung from my mom's phone.

My sister and I would hover over the computer as I sat in her lap watching the video

diaries the band posted each week.

However, my biggest flex is from the concert of Aug. 8, 2014, when I got to see the five guys live during their early 20s and before they broke up.

My best friend, Kallie Haynes, still holds the trophy for best Christmas gift I have ever received. As I sat stunned looking into the converse box with the ticket laying on the limited edition shoes, she told me that we were going to Boston to hear the boys live.

On Oct. 16, 2024, my whole childhood was turned inside-out.

The English singer, Liam Payne, was pronounced dead in Buenos Aires, Argentina after falling from his hotel balcony, located on the third floor, around 5:07 p.m.

Hearing that the boy whose poster slept beside me every night was found to have multiple drugs in his body at the time of his death, left me in utter disbelief. On top of all of this information, rumors filled my ears that Payne was also an abusive boyfriend in many of his past relationships.

Not only was my once celebrity crush gone forever, but he was a totally different person then I ever thought he was.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GABBY BLANCHARD

VTSU Castleton students Gabby Blanchard, front, and Kallie Haynes, middle, see One Direction in Foxboro as 8-year-olds. Also pictured is Hanynes' sister Katlin Brown.

For me, I think that knowing Liam grew into a man of many additions is harder to wrap my head around than the

fact that there will never be a 1D reunion...ever.

- Gabby Blanchard

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**The Spartan is the official student newspaper of VTSU Castleton. It functions to inform, educate and entertain readers accurately and responsibly. The University, its administration, faculty, student body and staff are not responsible for the content of the newspaper.*

SGA works for VTSU students

By Sophie Moore
Spartan Contributor

The Calvin Coolidge library is a comfy and quiet place to study and is loved by many Spartans. When it opened its doors this year, however, students were frustrated to find the hours had been shorter than in years past.

Their frustration bothered VTSU Castleton Student Government Association President Thomas Kehoe.

“When the library faced shortened hours, there was a shared worry across campus that this could be a step toward a permanent closure, which would severely impact the academic environment,” he said.

Kehoe said he realized as SGA president that the shortened hours was a big deal for students.

“This united voice showed SGA that extending library hours was critical for maintaining an essential academic resource and addressing widespread concerns,” he said.

So, the SGA started to work on it to see what could be done.

The library’s Liaison Librarian Charlotte Gerstein said it is “always helpful to know what students want and need” and that the SGA was a big part of subsequently extending the hours.

“What SGA did was advocate for this,” she said.

Gerstein said this shift was important so the library could “get back to what [they] usually offer to students.” She said she encourages students to “please speak up about anything you think students deserve or need or want to be successful and have the campus experience that they think they should have.”

The SGA helped to offer some student voice on this issue, and now we can all reap the rewards.

The library slowly extended its hours, and after returning from fall break, it was able to restore them to what they used to be, which are Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m.to 10 p.m., Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 2 p.m.to 10p.m.

Gerstein said she is excited that students have more time to use this resource here on campus.

Another SGA project that recently bloomed—excuse the flowery language—is the Yellow Tulip Project that SGA coordinated with the Wellness Center.

The project had students plant tulips this fall so they can all bloom in the spring to raise awareness about mental health and specifically depression.

This is not the only SGA Wellness collaboration this year, considering they also partnered to create the Wellness Fair. The fair offered a chance for students to get to know the therapists of the Wellness Center and have an open dialogue about wellness and how to achieve that best on campus.

“It’s really nice to be able to have a student voice” when it comes to wellness on campus, said Jackie Eddy, associate director of Wellness.

Eddy meets twice a week with SGA’s Secretary of Wellness Kayla Livingston. They discuss upcoming projects and how best to help the students on campus.

SGA also has a few projects in the works to curb food insecurity among students like putting new ovens in Ellis Hall and maybe even allowing students to donate guest swipes to students in need.

“SGA is always working on different projects” and there are many more to come this year, Kehoe said.

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

If you’re looking for a place to enjoy a coffee, get some studying done, or indulge in fresh, seasonal food, Frog Hollow Farmstead Café is your next go-to.

Owned by Janis and Jason Reinke, this café combines the warmth of a local hangout with the quality of a chef-driven menu, creating a welcoming space just a short drive from town.

The Reinkes moved from Cleveland Ohio four years ago to build their dream farm, and they’ve poured their passion for food, community, and sustainability into every corner of the café.

Upon entering the Farmstand Cafe, you’ve met with a cozy farmhouse vibe. Wooden tables decorated with seasonal flowers, pumpkins, and beautiful rolls of silverware sit atop.

Couples are occupied chatting over coffee, friends catch up over breakfast, and students settle in for a study session to the tune of classic songs like “Build Me Up Buttercup” and “Georgia on My Mind” as it softly plays over the speakers.

Multiple shelves in the corner of the cafe are overflowing with games; card games, board games, you name it. There’s even a big community table, perfect for groups.

“One Saturday, not long after we opened, a group of eight or ten, I think Castleton

students, came in and sat at the big community table,” Janis recalls. “They all got coffee and breakfast burritos, and they just stayed and played games. They were laughing and having fun and that has to be one of my favorite moments. That’s why we’re here and that’s why we have that big table,” she said with a smile.

For Janis and Jason, seasonality isn’t just a trend; it’s a commitment to serving food that nourishes not just the body but the mind, rooted in a genuine respect for how food is grown.

“We live in a world where you can get whatever you want, whenever you want,” says Janis, who leads the kitchen. “Eating seasonally is definitely hard, but I feel like the seasons reflect what our bodies need. In the summer, there’s lots of fresh foods and vegetables and lettuce and it’s hot so you tend to want to eat food that’s cold, like greens, that are water dense. And then in winter, we naturally want those heavier, comforting foods,” Janis said.

The farm’s produce, all grown without genetic modifications and often heirloom varieties, makes up a large part of the café’s offerings.

“For us, it’s important to know exactly where our food comes from, even at the seed level,” Janis explains. “The heirloom tomato seed that you might grow now is the same one that potentially your grandparents grew. Some of

the seeds go back hundreds of years.”

Janis and Jason also use open-pollinated seeds that need natural pollinators like bees.

“For us it’s important because I just feel like the more we modify the food that we eat even at the seed level, the less we know about how it will impact us,” she said.

That dedication to quality and seasonality has led to a lineup of customer favorites that change as the crops do. Currently, the breakfast burrito is winning over hearts and stomachs, and their freshly baked scones are close behind.

The breakfast sandwich is also quite popular, having a “cult following” after it first debuted at the Middlebury Farmers Market, she said.

With 26 five-star reviews on Google, Frog Hollow Farmstead Café has quickly gained a loyal following among locals and newcomers alike.

“I think that having quality ingredients makes quality food, and people notice that,” Janis says. “It’s fresh; we make everything from scratch down to our dressings. We pickle everything by hand. I feel like that’s probably the big thing.”

Janis and Jason want more Castleton students to come and visit café, “that’s why we put up posters about the student discount” Janis said. You heard that right, a 10% student discount when you bring your Castleton student ID.



Owners of The Farmstand Cafe, Janis and Jason-Reinke, top, pose with their son, Grady. The cafe’s menu is shown on a laptop.

So, if you’re in need of a peaceful place to study, a hearty and healthy breakfast burrito, or a game of cards, Janis and Jason have made sure it’s a spot that’s welcoming to everyone, student discount included.

Moving the backyard stage

Student muscian Tyler Serrani moves to Burlington for career growth

By Jess Emery
Castleton spartan

In the backyard of someone’s apartment on Main Street sits a makeshift stage and a couple of artists. One of the bands features Tyler Serrani and bandmates Hunter Smith and Logan Toleman.

Most students are familiar with Serrani’s music, so on the cold October evening, it’s safe to assume the majority of the crowd was there to watch him perform.

The band opened the show with some folk covers from artists like Tyler Childers. Then later in the night, it closed the show with fan favorites like “Standing in the Promenade” and “alrightokitsfine.”

They also covered the song “Brisk Outside,” from the Pleasant Boys, whose members are Will Buck and Adam Osha, both Castleton alums.

Toleman, Serrani, and Smith all come from different backgrounds and have different feelings when performing live.

For Toleman, this can be a euphoric sensation.

“The feeling I get on stage is just genuine euphoria. Nothing in my life matters, nothing else is on my mind except for playing the songs to the best of my ability and just having a genuinely good time,” he said.

For Smith, it’s not about a singular mindset, but how the group works together.

“When it’s all gelling on stage, there’s a shedding of the singular ego that elevates the entire performance. I play with a few groups and there have been moments coming off stage with all of them where we realize what had just taken place,” said Smith, also a Castleton graduate.

Serrani values feeling like himself on stage while being able to relate to his audience.

He started performing live in seventh grade with his school’s choir. He would do coffee house shows, but it was



Tyler Serrani and his band rocking out on Main Street at their Oct. 26 show.

always a bit frightening.

But as he got older, things got better.

“I remember fucking up and getting really in my head about things, but as I performed more and more and I grew into myself, it’s just become my form of expression and whenever I’m on stage I just do my best to be me. So, when I’m on stage I feel like me,” he said.

With each member bringing something different to the table, their musical influences are all over the map.

“The band itself is a menagerie of sonic forces, ranging from hyperpop, to folk influence, to shoegaze, it’s really all over the place, but unmistakably us,” Toleman said.

Like most artists, their musical influences bleed(s) into their sound as a band.

For Serrani, he takes pride in being undefined in their sound. They are a multi-genre band, which doesn’t limit them to one particular sound.

Serrani just wants to just be himself, and wants the same

for his bandmates.

“I want to be myself. But going forward for the band I want it to be me, I want it to be Logan, I want it to be Hunter. I want it to be a community-based thing where we’re all sitting in at sessions,” Serrani said.

Smith said he likes the idea of having a defined sound, and then throwing that definition out the window.

“At this point, ‘the band’ refers to Tyler, Logan, and myself, and Logan and I bring very different influences to his sound, so as we get older, we’re hoping to continue to add different elements to his recordings and take the idea of having a sound that people associate us with and kinda destroying it,” said Smith.

In the future, the guys hope to expand and add a drummer to their band. “Stagnancy is what kills artists. The only way to go is outwards and upwards, so we will definitely be expanding our reach,” Toleman said.

Becoming more Burlington-based will allow for bigger audiences and growth for the band.

For Serrani, that means moving to Burlington for a couple of months, which has been possible because of the flexibility with VTSU. He’s going to be able to take his classes online while he’s living in Burlington.

“That’s a liberty that I personally have just due to the merger. Which, I’m actually not upset with the merger. I’m upset that Castleton’s culture has kind of been diminished due to the merger but the merger, it is quite possibly benefiting me in the best way that I could have ever imagined.”

Serrani will be able to grow with his band in a way he didn’t think possible for his current situation as a student.

As for what’s coming in the future, Serrani gave some insider details as to what we can expect.

“Honestly, you know what, I’m going to spill. We’re doing

these things called the mimicry tapes. Which I’m basically just putting out a lot of different music throughout the year on these tapes that are probably going to be like six to eight songs long and it’s going to be Mimicry Tape Volume 1, Mimicry Tape Volume 2, 3, et cetera,” he said.

“It’s just going to be a bunch of collaborations with artists and solo songs that I can just spit out, that don’t need to have any particular story along with them that people need to follow along with.”

Serrani said there will be big things coming in December for eager fans and he appreciates the patience that listeners have.

“It’s been a very transitional time for me right now moving to Burlington so my artistry has been really hard for me to focus on and I think just being around everybody is really going to help me out with staying focused on my craft and just continuing to improve,” he said.

Moriarty House that housed Coffee Cottage not in VTSU Master Plan

By Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

There has been a lot of talk about what might become of the beloved Coffee Cottage on the VTSU Castleton campus, but it appears that the new layout for VTSU has not even considered the building or its future.

Assistant Vice President of Campus Operations Michael Stevens, whose primary location is the VTSU Lyndon campus, said that while the overall plan for VTSU buildings is

coming into the final stages in weeks to come, the fate of the Moriarty House that housed Coffee Cottage has not been a priority.

“There is a future possibility with the Coffee Cottage, but not in the first round of changes,” Stevens explained. “The Coffee Cottage is not considered in the Master Plan, but we will think about future considerations.”

Stevens’s response was in slight contrast to that of VTSU Castleton Student Government Association President Thomas

Kehoe, who gave a slightly more optimistic view.

“There are a few options about the future of the Coffee Cottage,” Kehoe claimed.

He said that Sodexo may be renewing their contract at the end of the year, although contractual information could not be disclosed.

“Nothing has been decided at this moment,” he said.

In the meantime, faculty, staff, and students alike are unhappy about the closure of the Coffee Cottage and the uncertainty of its future. Dean’s

Assistant Katherine Spaulding was disappointed to see the once bustling cafe close.

“We had another option besides Huden, so we would all walk to Coffee Cottage,” she said, adding that staffing was the most likely reason for the closure. “The two people that worked there now work for Fireside.”

Sodexo officials in previous interviews said the closure had more to do with a lack of student interest and sagging sales than staffing issues.

See “Coffee” on page 6



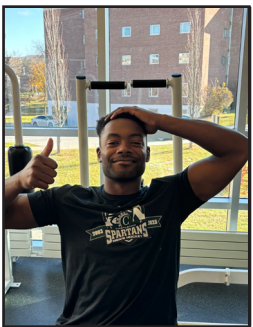
VTSU has no plans for the former Coffee Cottage.

Maddie on the street

By Madeleine Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

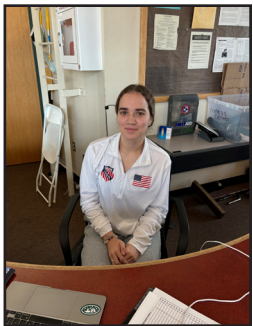


Question:
Are you voting this election and why?



Cedrick Theodore Junior

“Personally, I can’t vote because I am from Canada, but if I were to I think that Donald Trump preaches divide. That’s why I wouldn’t vote for him but also on the other side is chaos so it’s a lose lose.”



Victoria Gomez Freshman

“I’m voting because I think this is a very important election and also my parents are really encouraging it.”



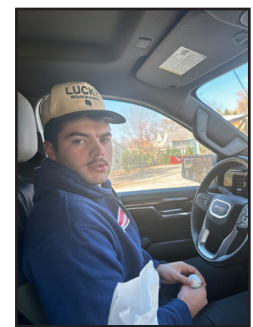
Travis Blake Senior

“I am voting in this election because it’s important for our country and I am voting for Donald Trump because hes going to make America great again.”



GiGi Wiseman Community member

“This election is very important to vote in. I am voting because it’s a very difficult election but the outcome is dire.”



Jake Barry Senior

“I am voting in the upcoming election because I care about our country and I want someone in office who I think cares about our country the most, which is Donald Trump.”

Counselors destigmatize mental health



Pictured above are two students holding stuffed bears handed out at the Wellness Center panel.

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

On Oct. 23, VTSU Castleton Student Government Association Secretary of Wellness Kayla Livingston partnered with The Castleton Wellness Center to create a wellness panel with the goal to encourage an open dialogue between counselors and student attendees.

Taking place in the 1787 Room, the hour-long event featured three counselors from the campus Wellness Center and SGA members, all dedicated to destigmatize mental health. Livingston emphasized that the event aimed to make counseling resources more accessible and approachable.

“A lot of students don’t know about or are afraid of wellness resources,” she said. “Counseling can feel intimidating, but I want students to feel more comfortable seeking help. This event was about opening a dialogue that promotes mental wellness as a common, approachable part of student life,” Livingston adds.

Student Meghan Mureddu was one of the first people to arrive at the event.

“I just wanted to support my counselor, who I love and adore,” Mureddu said.

With a team of five counselors, the Wellness Center offers a range of support options designed to fit student needs.

The center’s lead counselor, Jackie Eddy, along with staff members like Darby McLaughlin and Duncan Snitkin, emphasized that the Wellness Center aims to be a flexible and judgment-free zone. Walk-in hours are available from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m., Monday through Friday, with rotating counselors to accommodate students who may not be able to book a regular session.

“It’s not about lying on a couch and spilling your deepest fears,” McLaughlin explained to the audience. “Therapy is really just a conversation. You’re

in the driver’s seat, and we’re here to help offer a different perspective, but ultimately, it’s all about what you bring to the table.”

For students hesitant to seek counseling, McLaughlin suggested taking a low-commitment approach by just “coming in to try it out.”

“There’s no pressure to commit,” she reassured, and students can stay for as little as half an hour and decide later if counseling is right for them.

The panel also addressed the role students can play in supporting friends who may be struggling. McLaughlin encouraged students to be empathetic listeners.

“In general, you want to be empathetic, non-judgmental, and just there for them,” she said.

Snitkin expanded on this, noting that while friends can be supportive, it’s important to know personal limits.

“If a friend’s situation feels like too much for you to handle alone, recognize that some burdens aren’t yours to carry. You can walk them to their first appointment or even just sit with them during it, but don’t be afraid to acknowledge when professional help is needed,” he said.

Throughout the session, the counselors stressed that their roles are student-centered.

“Our boss is you and we’re here to protect you,” Snitkin said, stating the commitment to student privacy and HIPAA compliance.

Allie Sweeney, another counselor on the panel enthusiastically said she loves working with college students.

“This age group is quite fascinating just because you are all so curious...you’re starting a whole new journey. This is just one four-year aspect of your life and you have a whole life beyond ahead of you,” she said.

After reflecting on how the event went, Livingston encouraged students to reach out to SGA if they have wellness needs that aren’t being met on campus.

“If there’s anything you want that the school isn’t providing, come to SGA. I’m the person you can go to,” she said.

Livingston hopes that this panel is only the beginning of a campus-wide push toward normalizing conversations around mental health and well-being.

“Stepping foot into counseling can feel scary,” Livingston admitted. “But the more we talk about it and make it a part of our campus culture, the more students will feel comfortable seeking the help they need.”



Castleton field hockey team members took a team bonding trip to Flying Goat Yoga on Pond Hill Road. The team got to feed, relax, and meditate surrounded by various goats.



Field hockey takes on goat yoga

By Rosa Kehoe
Castleton Spartan

Emily Douglas, the Castleton’s women’s field hockey coach, decided the girls on her team needed a bonding activity outside of field hockey. And as out of the blue as it may sound, she was led to find goat yoga.

Douglas is a Castleton alum who started her coaching at the University of New Haven in Connecticut. But she chose to come back to Castleton. “I do love the community at Castleton,” she said.

Douglas loves her team and is always looking for different ways to bring the team together outside of Field hockey. “I mean field hockey is our one love and passion but being able to do things as a team that has nothing related to field hockey does help us on the field,” she said.

Douglas found out about goat yoga by simply living in Castleton. “I played at Castleton but I am also a local, so I have a lot of friends in the area. I was on Instagram sometime this summer and saw that some of my friends did it so I message them they told me that it was a local in Castleton that did it.” Douglas thought this form of bonding would be a great way to get the girls together as a team outside of practice. Though they had to wait till fall break to be able to do it, it was worth it, and they all had fun participating.

Douglas describes the goat yoga scene. You were first met with a line of yoga mats set out with hay between each row. There was a lot of hay but not one goat in sight. Douglas and the team got to do 30 minutes of regular yoga before the goats were let out of the barn. They trotted into the little pasture alongside the girls. The goats instantly made a beeline for the hay, and soon enough the field hockey team learned how food-motivated these goats were. These little goats would do anything for food, especially vegetables. The yoga instructor brought out multiple buckets of veggies so the girls could all feed the goats themselves.

Douglas continues saying, “They are so food motivated that we were able to do the yoga poses we wanted to take photos or just pet them, and they were food motivated.

They were obsessed and jumping on you and it was fun.”

She added, “The goats were full of personality as well which is kind of funny and they kind of were attracted to similar personalities with the team which was kind of funny like the dominated the bigger goats that were like more dominating more powerful form were attracted to the girls on the team that maybe had that personality in them which was kind of funny to see.”

All of the girls had a lot of fun doing goat yoga, Reilly Tennis being one of them. Tennis is a third-year player and has loved being on the team. She was ecstatic when she learned that the team was going to be doing goat yoga.

“I was excited, I have always wanted to participate in some kind of animal yoga. I feel really lucky to be able to do it with my teammates and that coach set it up!” she said.

Tennis, like some of the other girls, had never been around goats before but she loved every minute of it, and said that she would love to do it again! She tells us about her favorite parts about yoga. “The location of the farm was absolutely beautiful, especially with the fall foliage, it set the scene. But probably watching my teammates try to get a goat to jump on their backs was very funny to watch. There was a really sweet goat named Butters that I liked. And before we got started the instructor told us that there was a big goat named Latte and she tends to hang around people who are confident and leaders, so it was funny to watch who Latte chose to be around. No surprise she hung around coaches and our goalie Zoe,” she said with a smile.

Hana Doria, a Castleton Freshman, comments on the experience saying “My favorite part was the end where we were able to feed them and take fun pictures. They would stand up on two legs and put their feet on your chest,” she said.

Doria was excited to be able to do something with the team that was not related to field hockey. Like Tennis, Doria had never been around goats before after this experience she would love to do it again!

Emerson Stamp, who is also a Castleton Freshman, has also never been around goats but had a blast! “I was really excited we were doing goat yoga as a team bonding activity. Yoga is one of my favorite activities, so goat yoga has always been something that I’ve wanted to try so I was glad we got to do it,” she said.

Stamp describes her favorite part of the experience “when they all first came out from the barn. They all came running out towards us and it was super cute. Another memorable part was when we got to feed them. All the goats got super excited and started jumping up and climbing to get the food.” She recalls.

All the girls on the team had a blast participating in goat yoga and they all would do it again. They loved the team bonding opportunity and got to take a break away from field hockey as a team. Coach Douglas and the team would love to support and advertise goat yoga. They recommend this unique and fun opportunity right outside of Castleton. For those curious, it is called the Castleton Flying Goat Yoga located at 1422 Pond Hill Road in Castleton, Vermont.

Public safety app struggles to get downloads

By Jack Aicher
Spartan Contributor

A public safety app known as VTSU Safe is struggling with student engagement on the VTSU Castleton campus, according to Keith Molinari, associate director of Public Safety.

Although it has been available for nearly a year and a half, it has not been widely adopted by students, he said. The app provides users with direct access to emergency hotlines, friendly escorts and other support and emergency resources.

“I don’t think it’s promoted enough... it just needs to be advertised,” Molinari said in a recent interview.

He also mentioned a previous app with similar functions known as “Everbridge.”

According to Molinari, the Everbridge app allowed users to feel safe by selecting an SOS button to record audio and video, which would then be sent directly to the public safety office along with the individual’s location. Molinari referred to this feature as a “blue light.”

“We’re not at a blue light in your pocket yet, but we are at a virtual escort,” he said.

Molinari said that the current capabilities of the VTSU Safe app enable students to connect with Public Safety officers or local police officials who can aid in a range of situations, from feeling unsafe while walking home at night to experiencing a medical emergency.

“I think it will be promoted

a lot more next semester,” Molinari said.

This year, Molinari has been working to spread awareness of the resource. Before the fall semester, he held a seminar for dormitory residence assistants, discussing valuable aspects of Public Safety. He dedicated a significant amount of time to the uses of VTSU Safe to ensure that RAs are equipped with the proper safety tools.

When questioned about the application, the student body has expressed minimal awareness, though some had considerable interest.

“I think that there are benefits to it; they just aren’t well known,” said Emily Ely, a resident assistant at Babcock Hall.

Although she hasn’t used the app, Ely mentioned that some of the features discussed in the presentation stood out to her, particularly the ability to share your location with Public Safety officials.

See ‘App’ on page 6



The power of music

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Thousands and thousands of people at a Grateful Dead concert and almost anything goes. People are on LSD, smoking and selling weed, recording the concert to then sell, and having sex on blankets while people walk by.

“It was a rock and roll circus, but the atmosphere was phenomenal,” sociology professor Phill Lamy said, sharing one of many live music memories.

However, Lamy is not the only one in the VTSU Castleton community who has a love for the live music realm.

When asked why she enjoys music events and what it does for her, communications professor Sam Davis-Boyd said, “It is just cool to hear the different takes on music from both big and small venues.”

Growing up, Davis-Boyd and her mom would ride to school together and they would listen to her mom’s favorite songs. She said the music made for fun memories.

Davis-Boyd then shared the connection that music allows her to feel. She said it’s fun to be in the same place as people who also love the same music artists that you do, and music can do a lot of things for people.

“It’s a form of escapism. Certain songs do certain things for me,” she said.

Director of Nursing at Rutland HealthCare and Rehab, Racheal Dupuis, said that her, her daughter Hailey, and son Kaden, go to concerts with her all the time, and it makes her happy to have those memories to share with her kids.

“Music in general is just so connecting, both live and recorded,” she said.

Dupuis shared a wholesome moment of hers from a random Sunday morning.

She explained how she went for an early grocery run and found herself singing and swaying to the song “Take On Me” by A-ha as it was blasting through the Hannaford speakers. She noticed that the short, shelf stalker lady, with salt-and pepper colored hair, was casually reacting to the song in the same way.

“Don’t you just love this song,” Dupuis said to the 50-something-year-old woman before asking where to find the Good Culture Cottage Cheese.

The Hannaford employee said, “YES! I used to listen to it when I was in high school.”

Dupuis explained how the 1985 tune allowed for an even more positive customer to employee experience because of the quick connection the two made over the song.

Now, every time she hears that song, Dupuis says that the lady from the grocery store pops in her head.

“I never would have even given her a second thought if it were not for the music playing in the store that day,” she said.

For some, like history professor Andre Fleche, it’s the energy and being in the present moment that fills the heart with the art of live music.

“Live music captures things that a recording just doesn’t,” Fleche said. “The community experience with the crowd leads to a different kind of energy.”

Others find their love for live music stemming from the specific characteristics it brings.

Lamy explained how you can’t save live music. He said it’s a form of art being created instantly and then “snap” it’s gone. You can never hear the same exact version again, and recordings are just not the same.

“You can literally feel music. I get chills even thinking about music,” Lamy said.

He then shared his “best live music experience” with a big smile covering his face the whole time.

While managing a London Study Abroad semester In the winter of 2004, Lamy and his wife, Whitney, decided to take some time for themselves away from the 24 Castleton students that were with them on the trip.

The two of them went to see multi-instrumentalist, singer, composer, and performer, Steve Winwood and his band at the Dominion Theatre.

The famous music venue in London’s West End on Tottenham Court Road, is a smaller venue with a capacity of just over 2,000 seats, allowing for a more intimate setting.

“For me it was an electric feeling to be seeing one of my idols, who performed with some of the greatest rock bands ever, in a famous music theater, in the historic capital city of British rock,” Lamy said with excitement.

He remembers coincidentally sitting next to a man who was from the same generation as him.

Lamy said he and the British man talked through a whole entire song during the concert.

“Would you two shut the fuck up,” a random guy sitting in front of them yelled.

Lamy laughed and said he normally hates when people talk through songs too, but the connection he made was just super fun.

Fleche shared an unforgettable concert experience as well.

It was his first concert and he and his dad went to see the “Black Crowes.” Located in his hometown of Rochester, New York, the Auditorium Theatre was a small venue that was built in the first half of the twentieth century, allowing for an up close and loud performance from the band.

“You could feel every note. It was a packed show and an energetic performance, so it was easy to get caught up in the excitement of the crowd,” Fleche added, “It was a GREAT performance.”

Nursing student at VTSU Castleton, Kallie Haynes, shared a unique experience of hers from a PitBull concert.

Sept. 8, 2024, Pitbull was performing live at Saratoga Performing Arts Center, where Haynes and her family went to see Mr. Worldwide in action.

Haynes said that the venue was absolutely packed with people standing shoulder to shoulder and being stuck next to a 30-year-old woman who was drinking a White Claw.

“Although she was breathing her alcohol breath in my face while trying to talk to me the whole show, she was actually pretty fun to be around,” she said.

Haynes said that the intoxicated woman said her name was Madison and that her birthday was next week. She then went into giving Haynes a whole run down of her job, her boyfriend, and how she should be wearing a ring on her finger since she has been in a relationship for 10 years.

“She was stomping on my foot and getting hit by her sister for most of the show but I had a really fun time dancing with her,” Haynes said.



COURTESY PHOTOS
Professors, students and locals reminisce about live music, including shows at Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Study abroad student displays ceramic artwork

By Logan Bruce
Spartan Contributor

Students and faculty walking through the VTSU Castleton Fine Arts Center these days will see a ceramic display that traveled a long way.

The display showcases the work of student artist Anita Williams, who created the pieces of art in Seoul, South Korea, where she studied abroad for the spring semester.

“It was an amazing experience, from the different cultures to the language. I miss it and would recommend going,” Williams said with a smile.

Williams talked about the culture being very different from here. While the art was different, there was also the language. The language was tough to overcome with her inability to speak Korean fluently.

What helped with that were the people she surrounded herself with. They knew more of the language than she did and they were able to find people to surround themselves with. This allows them to understand

and better get involved with the culture there, she said.

The display in the Fine Art Center includes many pieces of ceramic artwork designed around the idea of the ancient period of Asia.

“I have always loved the ancient forms of artwork from the culture of Asia,” Williams said.

Her fascination for art in general started when she was younger and developed more as she got older. Her skills became even more diverse and better when she went to Korea and was able to learn about the different techniques and cultures built around art.

Some of Williams’s work is inspired by the period of the Goryeo Dynasty. Her piece from this era was a flat bottle with a mint color slip and she used the sgraffito technique to create the bird design. This was one of the many techniques she learned while developing skills studying abroad.

“While there are three main types of clay, the one used on the white and blue tiger is porcelain,” Williams said.

This beautiful work of art was centered around the Jo-



Anita Williams, right, and her roommate visit an art gallery in Seoul, South Korea, above left. William’s art on display in the FAC, above right.

seon period, she said. With the nice glaze around the vibrant blue and white color, Williams created a Tiger, lowering itself on its front paws and having the rear end of the piece higher in the air.

“The hand-building of art while studying in Korea made me want to explore those sections more and better my skills while developing more as an artist,” Williams said.

Williams said studying abroad in South Korea allowed

her to open up to new cultures and explore the art skills she loved.

“The average person does not make anything like this. The time and skill that it takes to make a piece of art like this is hard and takes lots of practice and many forms of education,” said freshman Chris Wronowski, who is taking art classes in the Fine Arts Center.

Many students notice the work displayed, whether they go in and have classes there or



CURTESY ANITA WILLIAMS

they are just in there for other events.

“The display is well-organized and presented. The colors popped out to me and made it more attention-grabbing,” said Jashon Holmes, a junior taking an art class in the Fine Arts Center.

He noticed the work while strolling through but said he had never explored the section. When looking deeper into the exhibit Holmes decided that the flat bottle was his favorite

piece.

“I like the design and how much attention to detail was put into just a small bottle. I also like how until I read about it, I did not fully understand the concept or what it was exactly, it made me learn something new” Holmes said.

“Going to Seoul, South Korea was an amazing experience. I would recommend it to anyone who asks,” Williams said.

How individuals find joy in a world of chaos

By Holly Lamson
Spartan Contributor

An empty Ferrero Rocher Hazelnut Chocolates container sits on the top shelf of her closet, each divot a hideaway for each of the penthouse rocks.

These rocks are special and get to retreat in their individual specimen holders. More rocks line the windowsill, looking out beyond the world below. The boxes under her bed contain a small portion of the earth, collected from streams, mountains, and parking lots.

Why does she enjoy rocks so much?

“I think they’re what’s in my brain,” VTSU Castleton junior, Courtney Gomes said with a look of charm.

Pebbles and boulders tumbling back and forth until they have smoothed out ideas she feels comfortable sharing with the world. Stata of each era of her life, stacked on one another, memories of the person she used to be. Minerals streaking the edges and glacial gloss, each building up her optimism, pessimism and convoluted moments.



CURTESY COURTNEY GOMES
Students and faculty share what brings them joy. For student Courtney Gomes, it’s collecting rocks.

The uniqueness of the rocks make up how different each thought is, somehow all from the same person.

Sometimes it’s important to balance being present within reality and relaxing away from everything else.

An empty mug of tea stares up at the ceiling, depleted from the meeting he had just minutes prior. Student art pieces clutter his walls. A glass dish of

black jellybeans is a tasty decoration ornamenting the front of his desk.

Professor Greg Engel finds he enjoys “mentally inhabiting other worlds,” specifically by consuming sci-fi or fantasy via reading or video games.

Mentally inhabiting other worlds gives him dopamine and a way to escape to something more relaxing.

The world is full of many

unpredictable things. The future is uncertain. There could be natural disasters. There could be unexpected political outcomes. There could be a change of plans. And yet, “riding the chaos is entertaining,” Engel said.

He goes on to state that just because something is unexpected does not mean it is bad.

There is havoc in the universe, and we are amid it.

“Sometimes you should just go with the flow,” states VTSU Castleton sophomore, CJ Dodge, when asked about how they find joy in a world of chaos.

Formless chatter echoes onto clanging plates and forks and the dishes students place on the conveyor belt. Smells of different foods waft about the air. A chair scratches the linoleum beneath as someone scooches out of their seat.

Dodge states that to go with the flow, you should “find the things you care about and stick to it.”

For them, this means making music, their passion. It also means hanging out with good friends, as talking to people

can be very helpful.

When asked what advice they have for people who struggle with happiness, they quipped, “If I had advice, I would use it.”

Though Dodge did bring up the importance of journaling and how helpful writing things out can be.

The world is full of everything, yet it is the details that are prettiest. Happiness is the little trinket you find on the side of the sidewalk that a crow may have dropped from its beak. Happiness is hearing someone hum a tune that’s been stuck in their head all day. Happiness is getting to pee after a long road trip. Happiness is waking up from a nice dream.

For River Capell, happiness means putting on headphones and locking themselves in their room because “in order to exist in a crazy place, you have to become calm to go out.”

Doing so allows them to reset. They also enjoy “making shit,” especially if doing so means making an art piece to give to someone else. But most of all, Capell likes to go outside and feel the sun on their skin

and find one thing that makes them smile. They say if you do this, something good will appear in your life that you will continue to look forward to.

The number of good things you can find in the world can change depending on your perception of it. Life can alter and move about just like our emotions that come along for the ride.

Kailey Abbott-Bishop grew up with a mom who collected fortune cookie wrappers. She had the stars in her wallet. One fortune sticks out. She looks away as she recalls the phrasing of this fortune, words that have impacted her very belief system. She looks at the reporter and says, “It doesn’t matter who is without a flaw. You have to remember life will ebb and flow like the tides. Some days you yourself are not good, but you are able to find the good that the world presents, while other days you are unable to find the good of the world and you have to allow yourself to be positive.”

She fidgets with her ring as she speaks.

Nursing:

On top of these trials, finding new educators for her department has proven to be a challenge.

“Obviously a nationwide nursing shortage is happening, and by default we’re having a nursing educator shortage because of that,” Stover said.

This shortage of nursing educators in Vermont follows the trend of other labor shortages in the state. Nurses in particular have the option to take positions nationwide after completing their education.

“It’s very hard to get nursing faculty. The pay is not consistent with the industry standard for nurses, and convincing someone to leave their nursing job at the bedside to come and teach for half is a hard sell,” said Jessica Beaty, a nursing educator on the Castleton campus.

Regardless of this, Beaty described how the department has been humming with more activity than ever after the merger.

“The LPN students and the ADN students that were attending classes at VTC are on this campus now, expanding in that we have more nursing students under the four programs at Castleton, where there used to be only two,” she continued.

Alexis Locke, a professor and member of the nursing staff, has been helping manage this shift with over eight years of nursing experience.

“With the merger, we’re definitely finding ways to be creative and work together, but it is going to take time to figure it out,” Locke said. “The students are engaged and happy to be here. The energy is there, and the drive for nursing and people wanting to be nurses is huge.”

VTSU Vice President of Admissions Maurice Ouimet also helped connect the dots of the nursing momentum.

“There is a positive trend on the front end of enrollment, mostly undergrad, but we’re definitely seeing an uptick in admissions for the nursing programs,” Ouimet said.

The expansion of Castleton’s nursing programs may supplement the loss of other academic programming on the campus, as Richard Reardon briefly explained while walking through the quiet halls of Stafford’s ground floor.

Reardon, the director for the School of Education, whose office is on the first floor, recommended that this reporter should “go upstairs to see what’s really happening in Stafford,” furthering that “the nursing school has been growing up there.”

“Through the transformation, a lot of programs have gone under and consolidated across the campuses, allowing more room for us to grow,” said Pam Alexander, dean’s assistant for the School of Nursing.

The theme of consolidation has been weighing heavily on the limited space on campus.

“When you start consolidating and bringing the nursing programs from other campuses here, it definitely does push out our walls,” Alexander said.

Through the complexities of merging programs and finding new educators, the faculty and staff work to maintain positive energy and a focus on the future.

“Even though the transition has been rough, one of the things that makes me feel good and that keeps me wanting to come in is the people that I work with. I can see clearly without question that these are people who are very committed to making this program work,” Alexander said.

Blog corner:

Perishables - Death row last meal request - Lawrence Russell Brewer

By Holly Lamson
Spartan Contributor

Perishables is a blog dedicated to humanizing the experiences and food of the criminals on death row. Those on death row have a limited shelf life before they perish, similar to a perishable food item they may eat on their last days.

Scattered fingernails, clumps of hair, frayed clothing. It was there: his remains. Imbedded into tar, fresh summer grass, and the chains his ankles were tied to. A Monday commuter, driving along Huff Creek Road, perhaps listening to a song to get them in

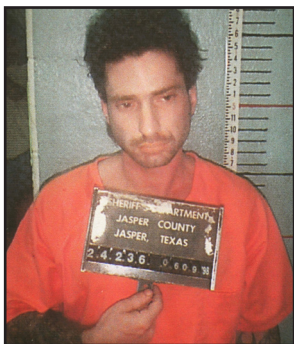
the mood for a work day, sees something that catches their eye.

Or perhaps 81 things catch their eye.

James Byrd Jr. was the victim of a hate crime. Unable to get a ride back home, Byrd was walking back from a party. He was just a mile away when a pickup truck pulled up, offering him a ride. He hopped in, only to return as a soulless corpse.

In the truck was: Shawn Berry, who enjoyed killing for the thrill of it, John “Possum” King, Berry’s longtime friend and white supremacist, and Lawrence Brewer, a racist psychopath.

I can’t imagine the rumbling fear that Byrd felt as the truck drove further and further from his home, bringing him to a secluded Texas road. I can’t even imagine the horror he felt as the three beat him, spray painted his face, urinated and defecated on him, then dragged him by the ankles on



bling fear that Byrd felt as the truck drove further and further from his home, bringing him to a secluded Texas road. I can’t even imagine the horror he felt as the three beat him, spray painted his face, urinated and defecated on him, then dragged him by the ankles on

the paved road, making Byrd more and more aware of the color of his own skin. Facing death, I can’t even imagine his will to live. He kept his head up for the 3 miles he was dragged, until his body finally hit a culvert and died.

The three were sent to prison: Berry was sentenced to life as he felt an amount of remorse for his actions, while King and Brewer were sentenced to death as they felt no remorse whatsoever.

Brewer was quoted saying, “As far as any regrets, no, I have no regrets. No, I’d do it all over again, to tell you the truth.”

For his death row meal, he requested and was given: two

chicken fried steaks smothered in gravy with sliced onions, a triple meat bacon cheeseburger with fixings on the side, a cheese omelet with ground beef, tomatoes, onions, bell peppers and jalapeños, a large bowl of fried okra with ketchup, one pound of barbecue with half a loaf of white bread, three fajitas with fixings, a Meat Lovers pizza, three root beers, one pint of Blue Bell vanilla ice cream, and a slab of peanut butter fudge with crushed peanuts.

He didn’t eat any of it. He “wasn’t hungry.”

Due to not eating his final meal despite ordering such a large one, Texas stopped granting last meal requests entirely.

Drip or drown - Judging the outfits on the VTSU Castleton campus

By Isiah Hughes
Spartan Contributor

Drip or Drown?
You think you got drip? If so, this blog is determined to test that theory by critiquing fits all around VTSU Castleton to see if you are really dripping or in fact drowning.

In this week’s addition of Drip or Drown, we have VTSU Castleton student Carly Centeno.

It was a regular sunny day with a cool breeze, and I was just walking around campus thinking of where my next daily cyph was going to be, when I ran into Mrs. Centeno who was also looking to cyph.

We proceeded to partake and while cyphing we got talking about our next blog ideas. Halfway through the cyph, thoroughly sauteed, I asked her if she was down to be in this week’s edition because earlier in the cyph she said she thought she was “stepping” in her fit.

Carly was wearing a red and white Bear sweater vest that she gotten thrifting in Sweden due to her love for thrifting, along with a white button up she had gotten off Shein, some blue jeans, and a pair of Doc Martin boots “with the fur,” she pointed out.

The fit was inspired by her boyfriend, who had picked out

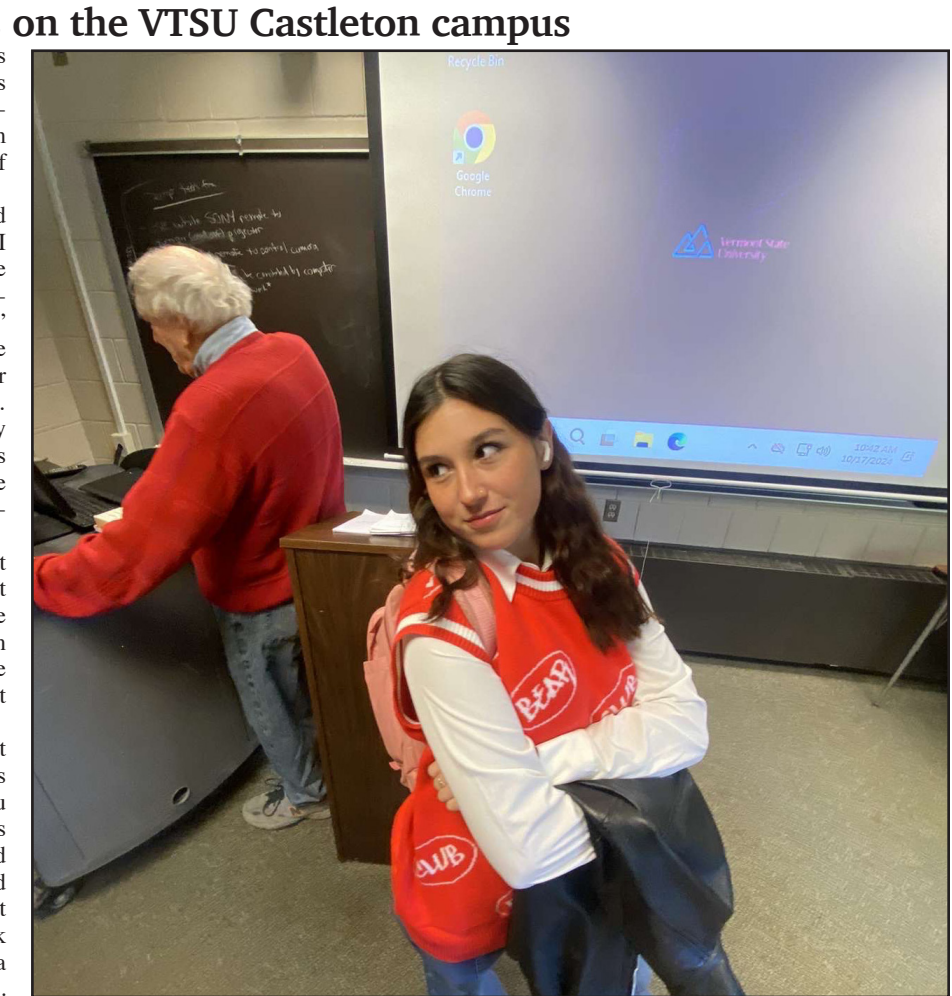
the fit for her. She liked his European taste and she was trying to match with her effective speaking teacher Burnham Holmes, who is to the left of Carly in the picture.

While hitting the spliff and baked like an easy bake oven, I asked Centeno how her fit made her feel? She said, “really professional but also a little nerdy.” She said she tries to dress like she is dressing to get ready for her career further down the line.

Centeno thought the only thing missing from the fit was some glasses that would have really completed the nerdy/professional look.

Even though Centeno did not pick out the fit, she still thought she was dripping because she wore that to give a presentation about fashion and you can’t give a fashion presentation and not represent – or so I hear.

Rating: 8/10. Carly ate that fit up, but she left some crumbs I must say. Because while you can’t go wrong with the where’s Waldo red and white combo and the fit was clean, the fit could have used some accessories that would have completed the look and enhanced the style, like a nice necklace and some glasses. But the fit was still fitting, so she is dripping while keeping it very demure, very presentable, very professional.



ISIAH HUGHES

Carly Centeno poses in her outfit that was deemed to drip, with professor Burnham Holmes in the background.

Coffee:

But the closure is impacting not just students looking for a smoothie or coffee on the academic side of campus. Many people forget or are unaware that there are still offices in the upstairs part of the Moriarty House. The building is still active, but with less recognition.

Assistant Director of Multilingual Students Services Mary Dinh said she misses the traffic and sense of community the cafe used to bring.

“It made us feel safe,” she said while discussing their department’s association with the Coffee Cottage. “We call it the Moriarty House instead of the Coffee Cottage,” Dinh added with a hint of sadness. “I would invite students down-

stairs for food and beverages... students and staff still use the bathrooms all the time.”

Dinh explained that the initial reason for closing was due to staffing issues.

“It was understaffed,” she said. “It was only open three or four days a week.”

She explained that the constant changing of hours and limited open hours turned students away.

Dinh also pointed out that the services offered in the building should be better advertised.

“We should have a signpost advertising our program,” she said.

This sentiment was shared by McNair Program Director Britt Green, who also has an

office upstairs.

“It was really strong my first year,” she said of the Coffee Cottage. “There was definitely a hustle and bustle,”

She explained that over time, staff had changed and when the student need for quick food and drink rose, the staff had to be shared between the Coffee Cottage and Fireside. So, the two staff members in the Cottage were also working at Fireside.

She said the space should offer something for commuter students, like a lounge, or have something that would cater to non-residential students.

“It’s a waste to have such a beautiful place not utilized,” she said.

And the biggest bear is?

By Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Every year Katmai National Park and preserve in Alaska holds a voting competition like no other.

This competition is strenuous and looks across the national park to find a very special bear...a very, fat bear.

Fat bear week is an online voting contest; where individuals can discover more about the awesome bears in Katmai National Park and get the chance to vote on the bear, they think is the biggest. The voting time frame usually spans between Oct. 2 and Oct. 8, and there is a winner every year.

The results are finally in, and this year’s fat bear champion is no other than (number 128) also known as Grazer. Katmai national park provides more information on the 2024 champion.

“Grazer has become one of the best anglers at Brooks River. She can fish successfully in many locations including the lip, far pool, and plunge pools

of Brooks Falls. She can chase down fleeing salmon in many parts of the river or patiently scavenge dead and dying salmon after they spawn. 128 will also fish overnight at Brooks Falls.”

The bears are getting ready for the annual hibernation periods during the harsh winter months in Alaska. Around January through November, brown bears need to gain weight to survive their long winter’s rest. For these animals, gaining weight is not just something casual to do, it is literally a decision of life and death. The weight they gain during their foraging periods is what they will live off during hibernation.

During these high intake periods, bears will have a wide diversity in their diet. Things they eat could include anything from mushrooms, berries, small game or even moose. However, the main course that is often on these bears’ menu is salmon, in fact most brown bears can consume 30-45 salmon a day!

These bears need to make sure they are obtaining enough

fat to last them through the harsh and long winter. For female brown bears the amount of fat on their bodies could also affect the health of their cubs as well. Brown bear cubs are born between late January and early February, and their mothers fat content has a direct effect on the quantity of milk she can provide for her cubs.

This year’s fat bear champion is not only excellent at gaining necessary weight, but she is also an expert mother as well. Katmai national park explained, “128 (Grazer) is a particularly defensive mother bear who has successfully raised two litters of cubs. She often preemptively confronts and attacks much larger bears—even large and dominant adult males—to ensure her cubs are safe.”

Surviving in the wild is always tough, there are obstacles around every corner for wildlife. I think it is remarkable however to take a step back, to make a connection, and really admire the changes wildlife will go through to survive.

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Spartans finding a groove heading into playoffs

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton men’s soccer team have performed exceptionally well in the final games of their season. To round out the 2024 season they played in 3 games, ending with two ties and one win that put them in the playoffs.

The Spartans were sent to Westfield State for a non-conference game on October 22. Less than a minute into the game, Westfield scored to put themselves ahead of the Spartans. Catching the Spartans by surprise and falling behind early on. In the first half, Westfield dominated the game and outshot the Spartans 10–2. The Owls were only ahead by one for the whole of the game, but Xander Berthiaume remained composed in the net.

When a player on Westfield was called for a hard foul in the box with 1:48 remaining, the Spartans finally took advantage of a chance. Toby

Ritzkowski stepped up without any issues. He delivered it to the left side of the goal to tie the game, which resulted in the final score being 1-1.

Castleton headed on another trip but this time to see an LEC matchup, UMass Boston. At the start of this game the Beacons outshot the Spartans 18-3 on net, but freshman Xander Berthiaume, stole the show with a career high 17 saves. It also helped having a strong defensive line from Liam Cramer, Holden Crouthamel, Wyatt Robbie, and Jacob Bart, who effectively kept the Beacons in check throughout the match.

Jacob Barth had some comments about the strong defensive performance stating, “I would say it wasn’t just the backline but a whole team effort. A lot of concentration and communication really got us through that game and earned us a draw.”

The two teams traded chances, but Boston primarily pushed the action toward Castleton’s defensive half. As

the match neared its end, the Beacons pushed for a late goal. Boston fired a shot that Berthiaume saved but could not control. Then they tried again for a follow-up attempt, but Berthiaume, composed and alert, made his 17th save, preserving the scoreless tie. The match ultimately ended in a draw.

The Spartans celebrated senior day with a 2-0 victory over Southern Maine on Friday evening. Though the Spartans faced defensive pressure early in the match, senior Adolphe Alfani managed a breakaway, going one-on-one with the Huskies’ goalkeeper. Alfani was fouled by USM, leading to a penalty kick. During the penalty setup, the USM bench received a yellow card due to an unruly coach.

Senior Toby Ritzkowski stepped up to take the penalty, successfully putting VTSU ahead 1-0 with 19:14 remaining in the game. The second half featured both teams exchanging shots and fouls. VTSU added an insurance goal

when Matt Spiller evaded a defender and found the net, extending the lead to 2-0 at 12:57. “I think we communicated and defended as a team and honestly this game we felt really connected as a whole,” Spiller said.

Southern Maine’s best scoring chance came in the closing moments when they sent a long free kick toward the goal, which was comfortably saved by Xander Berthiaume. The match was notably physical, resulting in six yellow cards, four for the Huskies and two for the Spartans.

Offensively, Castleton dominated, outshooting USM 8-4 in shots on goal. Berthiaume, who was named the LEC Rookie and Goalie of the Week, recorded four saves in his sixth shutout of the season.

The Spartans were locked into a playoff spot after their victory over USM, and they will play at Rhode Island College, this upcoming Tuesday.



CATLETONSPORTS
Xander Berthiaume getting set to make a save.



Peyton Richardson, above left, works to clear the ball from Spartan half. Spartans celebrate after burying a goal against Eastern Connecticut, above right.

Field hockey dominates, earns first seed

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

Consistency has been the hallmark of the VTSU Castleton Spartans field hockey team this season.

The Spartans are clicking on all cylinders riding a nine-game winning-streak. The team has gone undefeated in conference play, claiming the regular season LEC title after a win against Plymouth State and securing the 1-seed in the LEC tournament.

Head coach Emily Douglas and graduate assistant Alexis Ruiz and thrilled after their victory against Plymouth State.

“I was really happy after the win against Plymouth, but I felt there was potential of us being regular season champs after beating Keene,” Douglas said.

“I was really excited and honestly I felt pretty confident after the win,” Ruiz said. “The team has established a winning mindset, so their energy is always there. And they deserved it because of all the work we’ve put in which has given us home field advantage in the playoffs which is huge.”

Notching 15 wins this season marks the highest regular season win total Douglas has had in her tenure with the Spartans. She believes the key this season has been finding the positives when things aren’t going in their favor.

“We’ve had some rough games here and there, but overall, we’ve utilized those as learning opportunities rather than being miserable. We acknowledged we had a loss, but we learned our strengths and weaknesses,” Douglas said.

es,” Douglas said. “That really helped because now we’ve recognized where people look good and how well they can play off of each other.”

Ruiz, a first year graduate assistant, believes this program has the core values of a winner’s mentality, cohesiveness, and the ability to be resilient and bounce back from any obstacle. Although she is new to the program, she’s established a rapport with each of the girls on the team.

“I would say all of the girls trust me and I like that because I thought that would have been hard to develop, especially with a collegiate team, just because when you’re new you never know what you’re stepping into,” Ruiz said. “But I like how some of us are close in age and we’re able to talk about on- and off-the-field moments that we can relate to so I feel like the girls trust me.”

Though last year’s team was littered with experienced players, Ruiz had a sense that this team was going to be special.

“I knew we had a chance of being a good team because during preseason when I realized we had a big freshman class, with that newness on the team, it was nice to see the development and growth so quickly,” Ruiz said. “Seeing that working really well from the start of preseason helped them come together to have this outcome.”

Douglas said she had the same feeling in preseason.

“I remember our first practice, we walked away and I was like, ohh, we’re gonna be good! Just the intensity and speed, like everything about it looked awesome,” Douglas said. “Sometimes you just kind of have that



KATIE STAGER
Mackenna Roberson sends the ball during recent contest against Dneonta

feeling and I said that at Union during our first game this is one of the most talented overall teams that I’ve coached. I’ve had talented teams, obviously the team that won the championship, but as a cohesive unit, it’s been pretty awesome to see the way this team complements each other.”

With the Spartans locking down the #1 seed, they know they’re going to get everyone’s best shot in the tournament. Douglas looks back to the gritty win they had against Southern Maine.

“That game they played up to us 100%. We watched a lot of their film and we saw a different team, like more competitive, more speed so we’ve

kind of been aware of that since beating Keene, but we take it as an honor because you still got to get the work done,” Douglas said. “I think the biggest thing that we have to focus on is just playing our game and not focusing on theirs at all, not dropping to any level, not becoming frustrated, and keeping ourselves together as a cohesive unit.”

Although the Spartans are hot and have beaten every conference opponent, Douglas still believes any team they play in the tournament can win.

“Literally anyone that’s making the playoffs is a threat because things can change so much, like Keene was in overtime with one of the teams that’s

lower in the seedings so it’s unpredictable,” Douglas said. “I think everyone has a preference of who they want to see again because of matchups but I’d love to see Keene in the championship with us and see either West Conn or East Con again in the semifinals.”

One of the most overlooked parts of the season is that every single game the Spartans have had different goal scorers. The highest number of goals scored by a single player in a game has been two goals. This shows that they’re maybe not getting a lot of individual accolades, but they’re tough to defend because everyone is a threat to score.

Spartans fall short to Worcester State



The Spartans came up short against 31-6 against the Lancers to move to 3-5 on the season and 2-5 in the MASCAC.

Savoring the last season of Spartan hockey



CASTLETONSPORTS

Senior Stone Stelzl celebrates a goal from last season.

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

From the day I got onto campus, I knew eventually I would have my final season as a Spartan, but damn, it flew by. Heading into my fifth year season with all my best buddies is the icing on the cake. Thanks COVID for the extra year.

From the start of skates this season, something felt different, our team looked different, we have an old team who has gone through the ups and downs of the past few years. Every single one of us wants

that to change.

When I got to Castleton, I always wanted to leave it much better than I found it. This season is my last chance and a lot of others chance to leave that mark we all sought after when committing here.

All together the time of being a Spartan has flown by and I have made best friends for life because of this place and because of Spartan hockey.

I feel as though this last season is a hell of a way to cap off everything because it's the last season the Spartans will be in the NEHC and it will be a perfect send off after we make

some noise and shock the conference this season.

The process of getting into my final season has been an interesting one, going from a COVID freshman season playing only seven games to now nearly five years later being able to get a true fourth season of college hockey.

It honestly hasn't settled in yet for me that this is my last dance as a Spartan. I hope it doesn't settle, at least not until the season is over.

Came to play, came back to coach

Several former Spartan football players are back to coach on the same field

By Julian Chiemingo-Rivera
Spartan Contributor

Tyler Higley was a four-year starter at Castleton University. He played on both sides of the ball during his four years, finding more success on defense. He led the team with seven interceptions in 2015 earning ECFC First-Team All-Conference and Team Defensive Player of the Year.

Now he's the head coach. But since his years playing on the team, there have been numerous other players who have returned as alumni coaches.

Team 16 has one of the highest numbers of VTSU Castleton alumni on the coaching staff. But what is it about VTSU Castleton that keeps the alumni coming back to coach?

"I really looked up to my coaches," said Higley, a 2017 graduate and first-year head coach. "I saw the growth between myself and some of my friends of growing up and becoming adults."

Higley expressed how much he had matured throughout his collegiate career and how football shaped him to become a better person.

"I think I want to have an impact on people like that. Be a role model for them like be an adult involved in football, involved in their lives, and involved academically," said Higley.

This was a common theme among the alumni coaching staff.

"I felt like I owed the guys I got to know from being a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior. I felt like I owed them the same type of love and appreciation that I got from the coaches that I had here through four years," Defensive Line and Special Teams Coach Lukas Carlson said. "That's my main drive as a coach, trying to replicate the experience I had here as a student."

Carlson smiles as he talks about his role as a coach. He reflects on how coaching has truly changed his life.

"I started realizing people are looking up to me looking for a role model, inspiration, words of encouragement that I never really gave myself," Carlson said.

This took him maturing in the real world and finding his self-worth throughout his collegiate career. Carlson had found his self-worth through coaching, realizing his life was bigger than just stats on a sheet from a football game.

"I still talk to all my buddies here who are football players and not players, they are going to be in my wedding," said



Head coach Tyler Higley and Defensive Line and Special Teams Coach Lukas Carlson lead the team out of the locker room, top. Carlson, bottom left coaches a player. Higley, bottom right focuses on the game.

Carlson.

The VTSU football team has a mission statement that ends with "While establishing lifelong friendships and memories."

"The guys you played with are legitimately your friends for the rest of your lives," said Higley.

Friendships and memories are a core part of the football program and continue to be passed down through generations of players. You can see this with how many alumni coaches are still around and talk to prior teammates to this day.

"The friendship and memories piece is the most special, you know, and going to people's weddings," Wide Receivers Coach Zachary Howe said. "All really, really special people I would have never met

if I didn't play football here."

Howe reflected on how football shaped him as a person and truly made him work harder in school.

"I can't say it kept me off the streets, but it kept me in the textbooks, but it kept me in the textbooks because I wanted to be eligible and I didn't want to make a mistake out there," Howe said. "Football helped me personally stay out of trouble, gain experience, discipline, hard work, teamwork, focus."

The coaches said for them, football is more than just a sport. It also helps build character and shape boys into men.

"Definitely was special about the friendships and memories we made. Met a lot of great friends from different states. We all still keep in touch

with each other," Assistant Wide Receivers Coach Chance Fee said. "We actually have my college roommate's wedding next weekend, so all of us are getting back together."

Fee was given the opportunity to become a graduate assistant for the VTSU Castleton Athletics Department. Throughout this year of being around sports, he realized how much he missed being a part of the football program here.

"Last spring, I was asked to help coach during spring ball," Fee said. "When I was asked to coach, I had no hesitation."

"I love being here still and love being able to give back to the program that has given me so much over the past four years. And being able to teach these new kids what I've learned over the years and being able to pass down the

learnings has been a great experience," he said.

Fee is a very young coach but has a big heart for the athletics programs. He continues to learn how to inspire young adults while advancing in his coaching career.

"Being a young coach learning from Coach Higley, Coach Brehmeyer, Coach Carlson, Coach Howe, and Coach Cav, being able to be with them has taught me so much and I am very grateful for it," Fee said.

Being able to learn from a young age and having older mentors is important in the coaching industry. Coaching is not an easy and typical job.

"It's a lifestyle job, not like a normal job," Higley said. "Whether you're here or at home you're thinking of your job."

Higley explains how dif-

icult and consuming being a football coach is. You spend hours in an office watching film and game planning for the next opponent, then go out on the practice field for a few hours. Coaching is all over the place and involves lots of traveling, he said.

"When Coach Higley was hired and he said he needed a quarterbacks coach, I didn't even hesitate," Quarterbacks Coach Andrew Cavanagh said. "Zero hesitation type of thing where I just couldn't wait to come back and give back to the program that helped build me as a player and gave me the opportunities that I had."

Cavanagh has a special connection with not only this program but with the other coaches. Higley was his ball boy in high school and Coach Jordan Wright, the defensive backs coach at VTSU Castleton, went to Brattleboro High School.

"Building the long-lasting friendships, Coach Howe was a teammate of mine here. Now, flash forward 14 years to be able to coach with him after having formed those relationships and friendships as teammates, and now to be able to reunite and build more memories is special," Cavanagh said.

This reunion within the program has brought a stronger connection between the players and coaches.

"Great decision to come back and a lot of happy memories," said Howe

"I can't imagine doing anything else," Higley said. "The best decision I've ever made."

Soccer heading onwards to playoffs

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

In this issue, we have three matches from the Castleton women's soccer team to catch everyone up on. These were the girls' last three matches before they gear up for the playoffs.

The first match since we left off with the girls was against UMass Boston the number two team in a deep LEC conference. Spartans leading scorer Maggie McKearin set the tone in minute 11 by making the Beacons pay on a costly turnover, McKearin took down for a breakaway. Some back-and-forth action took place for the remainder of the half, but it remained a Spartan lead thanks

to several saves from Emma Ezzo.

Unfortunately, the second half told a different story. In minute 64, despite good goal-tending and defending, the Beacon's offense found a way to break through. Then again in minute 78, the Beacon's pressure resulted in another reward, and ultimately three points to take home from Dave Wolk Stadium.

Next up, was Bard College for the girls. Castleton took command of this game and demonstrated their superiority. Emma Kirby scored a talented header from a distance on a great ball from Lily Modica, and Maggie McKearin scored her eleventh of the season putting her in fourth in LEC scoring.

They outshot Bard 7-1 on target and won in just about every facet of the game despite being held to just two goals. The win was good for the girl's confidence as they were set to see the number one team in their conference for the season finale.

Last but definitely not least, the girls travelled to Southern Maine to close out the season against an undefeated and hungry Huskies team. USM unfortunately was all over the ball in this one and did to our Spartans what they had done to Bard just days prior.

Ezzo stood on her head in this one facing 36 shots, 18 of which were on target. The defense held strong and minimized high-end scoring chances but eventually, the Huskies

broke through and found the net on three occasions.

With that being the close to the year, the girls finished 3-5 in conference which put them in 5th place. They are set to play Eastern Connecticut Nov 5 on the road. They fell short when they met the Warriors in season on Oct 5, and now a month later the girls have a chance at redemption and a chance to keep the season alive. It has been a strong year for the Spartans with a core group of starters being seniors and the program looks to be in good hands with the talent in each of the other classes.



CASTLETONSPORTS

Emma Ezzo turned away 15 shots from University of Southern Maine players.



NEWS

Castleton grad Jana DeCamilla is making waves in the news world.

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ARTS

Three senior artists showcase their Senior Exhibit.

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SPORTS

Lady Spartans fall short in championship game.

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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, November 22, 2024

Somda's journey

Graphic designer Ruben Somda shares highlights of Castleton career

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

The journey to Ireland had the charm of a dream: castles in the mist, streets overflowing with art and history, and the thrilling anticipation of attending a one-of-a-kind presentation on graphic design for film.

Ruben Somda and one of their closest peers, Wes Simard, and their Professor William Deforest embarked on this creative journey last spring. They submerged themselves in the Irish surroundings and hopped from one spot to the next. Between the conference, cobbled alleyways, and lively areas, Somda felt their lifelong passion and creative direction begin to take shape.

"It was probably the biggest highlight of my life so far," Somda said.

Somda, a senior at Castleton University, described the workshop in Ireland as the culmination of years of exploration, struggle, and eventual clarity.

"They were right; you don't have to know what you're doing career-wise just yet because it happens. If you told me a year ago this is what I would be doing, I wouldn't have believed you," Somda said.

At first, Somda's journey to this point was anything from simple. Their life took a significant turn once their family won an opportunity to come to the United States through the green card lottery.

Somda was born in Burkina Faso, West Africa. As they reflected on the unexpected voyage from their youth home to Vermont, Somda revealed, "My mother was chosen, which is ironic because she never wanted to move."

After a brief time in New York, Somda's family moved to Vermont, where they adjusted to a new language, culture, and way of life.

But Somda thrived, attending four different schools throughout their young life and gaining determination and adaptability. These are qualities that would later support their artistic endeavors. Before finally choosing to come to VTSU Castleton, they grew up attending Burlington-area in-



COURTESY RUBEN SOMDA

VTSU Castleton senior Ruben Somda poses with a favorite knit hat.

stitutions including Champlain Valley Union High School and JFK Elementary in Winooski.

They initially considered enrolling at the University of Vermont, where their father was a maintenance staff member and offered tuition remission.

"I have beef with UVM. They had eliminated all the programs I wanted to do the year I enrolled," Somda said.

Although Castleton wasn't their first choice, it was the best option in a strange turn of events.

"I feel terrible saying all this now, but I'm glad I chose Castleton; I feel like this is the better call," they admitted.

Somda's good friend, Wes Simard, who's known them since high school, has witnessed the growth from "unap-

proachable" — at least at first glance — to a cherished creative partner and friend.

"I first met Ruben in high school. I was a junior while Ruben was a sophomore. We met through a Dungeons and Dragons group. I thought Ruben was very unapproachable at first. If you've never talked to them from an outside perspective, it's like, oh my gosh, that person hates me," Simard said. "Then you talk to them, and they're like, this is so great. I thought that Ruben was not cool with being friends with me, but then I met Ruben and talked to them, and they were great."

Eventually, Wes and Ruben became close friends in college and through the pandemic.

"I transferred to Castleton just to be with Ruben because

I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was like, oh wow, awesome, let's go hang out with Ruben. We eventually did every club together. Anything Ruben did, I was also a part of," Simard said.

At Castleton, their collaboration blossomed from design projects like the Rutland Pride logo to an independent study on graphic design in film and television.

After meeting them in an introductory graphic design course and visual storytelling, professors William Deforest and Sam Davis-Boyd immediately recognized Somda's unique style and talent.

"They came in and immediately did beautiful work. They did beautiful work, matching type and images, and you could see already their involvement

in InDesign and beautiful messaging."

He pointed out that politics, social identity, and the reflection of modern society have significantly impacted Somda's art. Their work frequently challenges convention by combining artistic talent with a consciousness of the world's significant issues, Deforest said.

Professor Sam Davis Boyd recalls Somda's early days in her course.

"Ruben took my Visual Storytelling class in the spring of 2022, and they've been a force in the program ever since," Boyd said. "They've done much in their time here and made a big impact. It's going to be weird when they're not here anymore."

As the current leader of the university's Content Lab, Somda took on projects like the recent voter registration campaign and the merger.

"This was the first voting campaign we've done as a merged institution," Boyd explains. "Ruben did a phenomenal job navigating new challenges, working with different departments, and even managing to get materials posted on new websites."

Deforest also noticed this while in Ireland.

"The creative energy around them constantly inspired Ruben and Wes and they bounced ideas off one another. It was really exciting to see," Deforest said.

When asked, "what's next?" Somda didn't really had a sure answer, at least not until the journey to Ireland to see graphic designer Annie Atkins speak at the Adobe MAX Conference.

Atkins, a renowned film graphic designer, wowed them with her method of creating movie sets and props. She talked about how she makes everything from documents and newspapers to carpets and wallpaper. Atkins immediately created excitement in the duo.

"Wes and I got through half of the presentation and kept pausing to talk about how cool it was. You can do anything in this field; it's exciting. We were talking afterward and told each other we had to do this,"

Somda said.

Before the trip, they created an independent study course on graphic design for TV and movies due to their newfound enthusiasm, looking into various projects and finally reaffirming their common objective: attending Atkins' workshop in Ireland.

It was an undertaking to raise the money for this trip. Encouraged to follow their goals, the duo set up a GoFundMe campaign. To help with some of their costs, they also created a presentation seeking assistance from Castleton's Student Government Association (SGA).

"At that point, we began considering what we could say to SGA to get them to agree to support us," Somda said.

In their presentation to SGA, they highlighted the potential for bringing these new talents back to campus and the educational advantages of attending the workshop. They hoped that Castleton could provide opportunities for additional students interested in graphic design and film.

"At this point, we had already gotten the tickets for the workshop, so we were going either way. It was just a matter of whether it would be easy," Simard said.

The workshop was a hands-on graphic design experience.

"It was probably one of the biggest highlights of my life so far. I've never really been a person who thinks that when I put my mind to something, it will happen, and it takes time for me to get to that point. So being confident in something and thinking this needs to happen helped," they said.

Somda said they will leave the University believing that artistic expression has the power to bridge cultural boundaries, tell stories, and influence people's lives, in addition to having a deeper appreciation for design. Somda said they are prepared to leave their mark on the world of opportunities that lie ahead, whether that's here in the United States or in Ireland, where the duo plans to move to.

Select Board approves rec. center

By Reilly Marsden
Spartan Contributor

Cheers and applause erupted during the Castleton Select Board's Nov. 11 meeting as the former Castleton Village School was taken off the active market.

The board voted unanimously in favor of recreation center advocates who want to continue transforming the school into a recreation hub.

Selectman Mark Brown championed the effort, passionately promoting the potential opportunities the building could offer the community and surrounding areas.

"Leadership has to be bold, and I think this is a time for the community to be bold and make a positive move forward," Brown said.

Brown spoke of several advantages a recreation center would provide the town. Attracting younger families to the area, boosting the local economy and keeping youth out of trouble keyed his motivation. The meeting room was

packed with some people left standing in order to hear the board's decision.

To curb the time spent listening to public testimony, the board requested a "spokesperson" for those in favor of a rec center and for those who wanted to keep the building on the market. The Select Board allotted both sides five minutes to plead their cases.

Andy Vermilyea, the President of the Friends of Castleton Parks and Recreation, spoke on behalf of the public who supported utilizing the former school as an activity center.

"Having the building off the market would be incredible for our ability to fundraise," he said. "We're willing to write grants to improve the gym floor, do other projects in the building that would increase its value. We can't write those grants if the building's up for sale," he added.

Vermilyea, who is also a science professor at Vermont State University's Castleton campus, talked about several "one-off" activities and weekly

staples such as theater auditions, paint and sips, hiking trips, cornhole, and the wildly popular pickleball, which attracts 40-50 people a week.

His goal of providing family-friendly activities for people of all ages was met with a unanimous vote of approval.

But the decision did not occur without apprehension.

Although no one from the public spoke in opposition, Selectman Robert Spaulding conveyed concern prior to the vote—citing poor revenue and potential costly repairs.

"Now that you've got all these programs, the revenue side should be coming up. If it's not coming up, we have an issue," Spaulding remarked. He noted his apprehension did not mean he was opposed to the idea of a recreation center, but he concluded if there was a serious buyer, the town should consider the potential income.

"If we ever in the future were looking to build something like that, there's no way possible we'd ever be able to afford any kind of building



COURTESY ANDY VERMILYEA

Residents play pickleball at the former Castleton Village School.

or a rec center anywhere... any maintenance that we have to put in it for the foreseeable future, regardless is just going to increase the value of the property," said Selectman Rob Steele in response to Spaulding's concerns.

Steele made his support

of the center known when he recognized the members of the parks and rec group's effort to better the community.

"They've really shown initiative and done awesome in the past couple months, and I think they'll be able to keep it going," he said.

Vermilyea and the Friends of Castleton Parks and Recreation celebrated their newfound freedom with one goal in mind—transform the former village school into a treasured part of the Castleton community.

See 'Board' on page 6



COURTESY WILL SMITH

Graduate student Will Smith, in the background with the hat, works on a film project at Savannah College of Art And Design. Smith graduated from VTSU Castleton last May.

Holy crap I'm flying!

Will Smith is a 2024 graduate of VTSU Castleton now pursuing a master's degree in Film Studies at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia.

When I was asked to write a guest piece for the Spartan, I was worried—worried about saying the wrong thing about my experiences and dissuading someone from going to graduate school. I will say, much like undergrad, I am not the target audience.

So far, my time has not been the “typical” student experience. Also, in the words of Sir Charles Barkley, “I am not a role model.”

I have been waiting almost 30 years to write that last line. Digression aside, as with everything, take this piece with a grain of salt. If you decide to go to grad school, it could be the best thing that has happened to you. It could be the best decision you will ever make. Or.

When Dante wrote the Inferno, he did not include all the levels of hell because if he had, there would have been a lengthy chapter about graduate school and the students who go there.

I think the level is in between sloth and gluttony. To pass to the next level, Dante must sit through two three-hour lectures, a lab in which no one knows what to do, and then do homework until Seth Meyers comes on the Television every day for the next few years.

All the while, Beatrice or Virgil asks if you want to hang out, but you can't because you have to watch 50 films in a week, and they don't understand because it looks like you are just relaxing.

No, I am in film school.

I have to watch films forever.

I don't want to do it on my time off.

Also, I do not remember hearing that people are just not like you for no discernable reason. It could be another student, that worker with no hair and an evil squint that rolls his eyes every time you say hello, or the custodian who wants to go home and not deal with your crap.

They will just not like you.

And to be fair, most of the time, they will not like you for petty reasons you will not understand. Then also, they may not like you because they are jealous of how freaking awesome you are.

Unless you're a jerk and do not understand constructive criticism, there is probably no way of knowing why someone doesn't like you. If you are a jerk and do not understand constructive criticism, then that's why people do not like you.

The worst part is that you can't turn it off. In my downtime, I sit there and wonder what else I should do. I try to relax, but the guilt and stress get to me. Honestly, I think this could be a me problem, but I know many people go through this.

Regardless of all of these things, I am making it. I am clueless about how I have gotten this far, but like the baby bird that gets kicked out of the nest, I'm doing it; I'm flying.

Landing may be a problem, but who cares while I'm in my element? That's a problem for another time.

I have learned some things, mainly about myself. That should count for something. One of the things I have learned is to cherish the ones you can lean on. I could not do this by myself. From friends who help me by watching my films to my family who make sure I eat, none of this would be possible without them. I thank the stars that I have them in my life. Seriously, you people rock and thank you.

- Will Smith



JOE VYVIAL

These aren't your average rolls

I have yet to live a year where my mother's delicious rolls are not the front and center of our Thanksgiving feast...and I hope that day never comes.

A soft and airy inside with the perfect amount of crisp to the exterior of the knotted lump of dough.

No one knows what makes Momma Lisa rolls so addictive, however I believe it's love.

Not only does my mom, Momma Lisa, make at least four dozen of her infinite rolls for our family each Thanksgiving, but people will call her and offer her money for a couple dozen for themselves.

The love my family has for my mom's rolls is so big that whenever she makes some, my dad and I will take the first pick, placing the rolls in Ziplock bags, and hiding them throughout the house away from the others. However, this trick of ours isn't so fun when my father forgets where he put the buttery goodness.

The recipe came from my Aunt Patty (although my mom claims hers are better.) The first time my mom tried out the



recipe was around the period of 2001, and never stopped perfecting them since.

These rolls have been the highlight of Blanchard's Thanksgiving table for as long as I can remember and continue to gain love from other families each year.

When asked what this year's Thanksgiving menu was going to look like and who was making what, before anything was discussed my brother's girlfriend, Olivia, sputtered out “WILL YOU MAKE YOUR ROLLS,” while gleaming into

my mother's eyes.

There have also been many times that I have had my mom make her rolls for my best friend, Kallie, as a birthday present. Kallie is the pickiest eater I know (she refuses to eat rigatoni shaped pasta but LOVES spaghetti because the shapes “taste different”) but will devour a dozen of Momma Lisa's rolls within two days.

Not only can these rolls be eaten by themselves, but they work in every way; dip them in your gravy, make a sandwich with your turkey, slap some

butter on them and warm it up. No matter how you choose to bless your mouth with these fluffy delights, you will be filled with warmth as your taste buds dance.

I remember one year when we did not have an oven, however, don't be fooled, because we would have never let Momma Lisa slide out of making her annual dish.

That year we went as far as buying a convection oven that sat on two cutting boards and placed on top of our blue countertop. The oven was so small that you could only fit about eight knots of dough at most. But after many rotations of baking then cooling, we still had enough rolls for all 30 family members to enjoy that year.

The rolls are the first thing on everyone's plate, the last thing to be eaten, and the start to all leftover inventions. Momma's rolls continue to be the beginning, middle, and end to every one of my Thanksgiving meals.

- Gabby Blanchard

Our weekly food for thought

On a Monday night at 6:30 p.m. sharp you'll find six girls gathered around the coffee table in an upstairs apartment on Main Street or sitting around the big circle table in another apartment on Elm Street.

They'll be sharing stories about their day, playing music, sharing a meal with some wine, and of course they will be sorting out their highs, their lows, and their buffaloes (Don't fret, I'll explain later).

I met Hadley and Reilly freshman year of college.

Scratch that—I knew Hadley in high school. But we didn't officially meet until college.

When sophomore year rolled around, (and) I was randomly paired with Reilly, Hadley, and Hannah as roommates. But we didn't become close friends until junior year.

Now enter Sya and Abby.

We all lived together in Wheeler before Sya, Reilly and I studied abroad.

I remember us all having such a fear for the unknown future. It felt like we were just barely starting to get settled into our friendship and life together and now we were all being separated.

This would be the last time we lived together.

Flash forward six months and we were determined to keep our closeness. Abby and I signed the lease for our apart-



COURTESY JESS EMERY

Senior Jess Emery, front left, enjoys a weekly meal with her closest friends. But the gatherings are about a lot more than food.

ment on Elm and Sya, Hadley, and Reilly had theirs on Main.

Hannah was tragically stuck in the dorms but she's fine, she spends the majority of her time at the Main Street apartment anyway.

We came up with a plan for weekly dinners pretty immediately. We wanted something to look forward to during the week and a set time to force us to all get together.

We alternate hosting Family Dinner each week. Whichever apartment is hosting, the other will contribute a side dish or desert.

However, this last week was an exception, we're all pretty

broke so we stole popcorn and had a movie night instead.

Every Monday night, we meet at one of our places. If it's at Reilly, Hadley, and Sya's, then Abby will bring cupcakes, I'll bring wine, and Hannah also contributes a little something.

During dinner, I'll usually propose we discuss our High, Low, Buffalo.

It's simple, the high is the high of your day (or week, or weekend, depending on how we feel). The low is the low of your day, and the buffalo is a like a wild card. You could share a fun fact or a silly story. It's just something you'd like

to share with the group.

I cherish these Family Dinners with my friends. It's one thing to stumble upon friendship due to forced proximity, but it's another thing entirely to keep the friendship up after we pass the roommate stage.

It all feels very adult, and it feels very purposeful. We're actively making the choice to spend our last years of college together. And there's no one else we'd rather do it with.

Very recently I was so excited to get the hell out of Castleton, out of Vermont, out of the United States.

But soon, life will never look like this again. We'll be sharing our High, Low, Buffalo across text instead of the dinner table. We'll send each other links to music videos and shared Spotify playlists instead of smooching together on the old brown couch to watch them together.

It's so cliché but it really is funny how life works that way. We're in such a rush for the Next Big Thing that we forget to cherish the moments we're in.

I'm so relieved my friends and I all slowed down to share a meal and a chat before we can no longer do that.

- Jess Emery

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Graduate program presentation success

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

On Nov. 14 at the Academic Center, the final presentation in the three-part “Focus on Your Future” series took place.

Titled “Graduate School: Right for You, Right Now?,” the session attracted a group of students hoping to gain insights from experts about how to take the next step toward graduate school.

As attendees arrived, each received a raffle ticket and a TRIO goodie bag containing sticky notes, pens, pencils, a highlighter, and a stress ball. A raffle drawing also offered one last bit of excitement to the presentation,

Following the distribution of apple cider and donuts, Doe Dahm, the Director of Writing and Communication, introduced speakers; Deborah (Debbie) Warnock and Brit Green from the VTSU McNair Scholars Program.

Dawn gave thanks to two of her academic support mentors, Tiara Robinson and Erin Forkin, saying they were “instrumental in getting this series off the ground.”

The presentation began with a question for the audience: “What are some reasons one would go to graduate school?”

Tiara Robinson responded, “To broaden the spectrum of what I’m learning now.” Rachel Mark, the director of Academic Support, added, “For certifications, licenses to teach, to receive a higher pay grade.”

The presenters also discussed reasons some may choose not to attend graduate school, citing factors like delaying the inevitable, cost, and avoiding the job market.

“It doesn’t have to be [expensive], though, and we’ll talk about that,” Green added, aiming to debunk some common concerns.

Warnock offered her perspective on attending graduate school just to delay entering the workforce.

“So, you don’t want to go just because you don’t know what else to do. That’s not a good reason to go to graduate school,” she cautioned.

Erin Forkin, who is currently applying to graduate school, shared advice on choosing a program.

“Something important to note is that your master’s does not have to be the same degree type as your bachelor’s,” they said.

The presentation then outlined the different types of graduate degrees. According to Green, options include professional degrees, PhDs, and MAS.

“There’s no one-size-fits-all for graduate school, and there’s no path that you have to take,” Green emphasized. “You can still get to where you want to go.”

Warnock reflected on her own graduate experience, highlighting the role of mentorship.

“What’s really important is the relationship you develop with your faculty mentor and the work that you do with them. I thought it was just like undergrad, in terms of taking courses, writing papers, and getting through classes, but that’s not the case,” she said. “Developing a relationship with a faculty mentor, publishing, and doing research together is really the most important part.”

Green gave her own advice.

“You have to find out, by reverse engineering, what you want to be when you grow up. Figure out if you need to go to graduate school and what kind of track you need to go into,” she said. “You’re going to have to learn how to prioritize this long list of responsibilities, and it will be scary and daunting at first. But at many schools, there are Resource Centers specifically for graduate students. Utilize those. Utilize your resource centers, time management—all the things we’ve worked hard on in undergrad.”

As the presentation ended, both Warnock and Green encouraged students to consider the McNair Program and explore scholarships available to low-income students, first-generation students, and students from underrepresented demographics.

Juggling motherhood and news

‘21 grad Jana DeCamilla balances 3 kids, TV news, and crime podcast



VTSU grad Jana DeCamilla stands proudly in front of a screen showcasing her Evidence Room podcast.

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

The sound of her 2-year-old’s breathing comes through the baby monitor placed next to her phone while she was on an interview call after a very emotional day at work.

“Seeing my daughter see me on TV and screaming and jumping up and down is like better than a million dollars, so it’s worth it,” said Jana DeCamilla in a shaky voice as tears filled her eyes.

DeCamilla – a mother of three, fiancée, digital content creator for WRGB in Albany, independent author and all-around go-getter – one way or another, makes it work.

“I’d like to think of her as the next Liz Bishop, maybe one day the next Barbra Walters,” said Silke Johnson, friend of eight years and godmother of DeCamilla’s youngest.

Her start

DeCamilla has a brother, Billy, and a sister, Erica Bombard. Although they all share the same mother, Karen Kasold Hymes, DeCamilla almost felt like an only child growing up. Billy was 11 years older, Erica was nine, and the two lived with their father from Hymes’ first marriage.

DeCamilla and her family bounced around a little bit in her younger years, living in three different houses, the first in the small country town of Cooperstown, New York.

The whole inside of the house was filled with bright colors and the vibrant paint spread onto her bedroom walls, along with a waterbed and a cage in the corner filled with baby ducks.

After Cooperstown was Albany, New York, the place where she really grew up.

DeCamilla has been true crime obsessed since a very young age and remembers when she was just 8 years old watching true crime documen-

taries at home with her best friend, Juliana Bernier.

They were so fascinated with the psychology of these monstrous crimes, that they needed their questions answered. “Why would someone do this? What is wrong with them?”

When DeCamilla fell in love with the process of digging up the childhood of serial killers and getting to the bottom of cold cases, she knew it was going to be a lifelong love interest.

School and style

Electric blue, tropical pink, wild orchid purple and fire engine, stop the room red.

Ever since she was 11 years old (the first time she dyed her hair) DeCamilla has always had a unique way of expressing herself. She loved to stand out, and for her, colored hair felt like the right way to do that.

“I remember quite a bit of red,” VTSU Castleton Communications Professor David Blow said.

“She always had really bright hair,” said fellow Communications Professor Sam Davis-Boyd.

“I think she had bright pink hair when she first joined my class,” Communications Department Chair Michael Talbott said.

As it was not common in her developing years for people to be walking around with full heads of neon, “unless you shopped at Hot Topic and wore baggy jeans with chains,” dying her hair was an important part of who DeCamilla was. She liked being remembered as the girl with bright hair who, instead of baggy jeans, wore Uggs and splattered her bubbly personality all over you.

“It hurts my soul to have to have this boring brown hair. But, colorful hair is more common now, so I like to think that I can blend in and STILL stand out,” DeCamilla said.

College started slow for DeCamilla. She began at a



COURTESY OF JANA DECAMILLA

Jana and her family posing for a New Years photo.

college prep school when she was 18 but knew she was “in no way ready to be there.” So, the young adult started to waitress at “The Lagoon” in Lake George instead.

“I got her published in the Lake George Mirror, about the Lagoon, and I think it ignited a little bit of a spark. She always liked to write, but I think she had fun getting published,” Blow said.

But writing was in her veins prior to meeting Blow. In April of 2019, DeCamilla published her first book on Amazon called “Scarlet’s Angel.”

“She was always a great communicator and those are skills you need for writing,” Talbott said.

About three years after starting at the Lagoon, in January 2016, 21-year-old DeCamilla had her first son, Cire, and she

knew she needed to give the college world another try.

The following year she started her college journey at SUNY Adirondack, located in Queensbury New York. At the time, the school had a partnership with VTSU Castleton where you could get in-state tuition if you went for your bachelor’s degree. After receiving her associate’s degree in creative writing at SUNY, she headed to Castleton, but this time in Communications.

Once DeCamilla was two years deep in creative writing, she realized that it was unrealistic for her to pay bills by writing crime fiction. That’s when she found the communications program, but she wasn’t sure the news world was for her.

“I don’t wanna tell someone else’s story,” DeCamilla said with passion.

With a little time and various classes, DeCamilla realized that someone’s story can be just as much fun, if not more, than the stories she could spin in her head.

She started off great, driving to Castleton each day from her house, located near the Vermont-New York border. Then came COVID, and she was forced to finish classes online.

Thanksgiving that year looked a little different than usual for DeCamilla and students, Marty Kelly, Jake McCarthy, and Sophia Buckley-Clement.

Not a lot of people were willing to volunteer their time to personally fill cars of those less fortunate with holiday goods, but DeCamilla, while seven months pregnant, was one of four who did.

See “Jana” on page 6

Only Bod Pod in Vermont looking to expand to the public



TORI RAYMOND

Vermont’s only Bod Pod is located in Jeffords.

By Tori Raymond
Spartan Contributor

Doing an accurate lab requires many different methods and equations, and for certain labs on body mass studies, that involves a collection of data from a skin fold.

There are all different types of equations that represent the parts of each individual de-

pending on factors like age, gender and race.

One day in one of Health and Exercise Professor Andrea Corcoran’s classes, a problem became evident. One student’s race and ethnicity were not in the textbook or anywhere online for equations. There weren’t any equations made for this person to use.

“I was mortified because

I’m not just going to tell the student just pick something else that’s not you,” Corcoran said in a recent interview.

That’s when Corcoran decided something needed to change to make sure this wouldn’t happen again.

“We needed to start collecting data and make our own equations that then sometime in the future, when a student who doesn’t fit into one of the categories for whatever reason... Now we have equations,” she states.

The equations weren’t quite enough to fulfill Corcoran’s desire to create the most accurate formulas to calculate body fat percentage though.

Through thorough research, she decided a machine known as the Bod Pod would be the most effectively accurate way to track and calculate someone’s body’s true weight distribution.

The Bod Pod is a large machine that uses air displacement to determine someone’s body fat percentage and muscle mass to find a true weight. It sits at about six feet tall and has a simple plastic sitting place inside.

It’s used to help Corcoran

and her classes create the most accurate equations possible while asking everyone who uses the Bod Pod to also do a skin fold. Students are able to use the Bod Pod as a tool for independent research, which two students have done and been able to present their findings at conferences in Springfield, Massachusetts and Washington D.C.

Corcoran said there has also been some public interest of people wanting to use the Bod Pod to simply know their body composition in general.

“The goal one day is to turn that room into a health and exercise testing center so that not just people on campus, but even in the community, could sign up for a time slot to come and have their body composition done using this super accurate method,” Corcoran states.

Plans are already being set into motion for the testing center with the sign already hanging on the door. The vision is to have a public pathway into the building and have the room set up like a medical examination room. The public would be able to book appointments and have their testing done and get

their results after calculations are made by students.

The health and exercise students would be the interns conducting the testing and have the ability to gain in-field knowledge while working with the public on the Bod Pod in this center.

“This is the only Bod Pod in Vermont,” she said proudly.

Corcoran is keen on making this available to as many people as possible because of how incredible of an opportunity it is to have the Bod Pod here on campus in such a rural area.

“The more that we know, the more we know that percent body fat is really important to be thinking about and body composition in general and not just the value on the scale, because the scale doesn’t tell you whether you have body fat or muscle mass, so it’s kind of a key part on a health journey,” she states.

The two-part renovation needed for the Bod Pod to become publicly accessible has already begun with the second part of the renovation hopefully coming over the summer of 2025, she said.

Maddie on the street

By Madeleine Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



Question:

What are you thankful for and what's your favorite Thanksgiving food?



Anthony Persi
Junior

"This year I am thankful for the boys on the hockey team. My favorite Thanksgiving food has to be the stuffing."



Joe Russel
Graduate

"I am thankful that I will be able to spend Christmas at home this year. My favorite Thanksgiving food is definitely stuffing."



Ryan Macoy
Senior

"I am most thankful for moving to New England. My favorite Thanksgiving food is the Turkey."



Josh Peters
Senior

"I am a religious person so I am thankful for Jesus. My favorite food has to be the Turkey because my dad always fries it in peanut oil with cajun seasoning injections. I'm trying to make it myself this year."



Annin Daley
Junior

"I am thankful for my family, friends and my dog, Mac. My favorite food during Thanksgiving is probably mashed potatoes."



COURTESY OF WILLIAM DEFOREST

DeForest when he was in his twenties, above, and his home art studio.



COURTESY OF WILLIAM DEFOREST

Graphic Design professor Bill DeForest posing with the "Big Picture," in his office.

Becoming Bill

Castleton professor Bill DeForest discusses life and his career in graphic design

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

Not many people would call the Oxford Dictionary their favorite book. And not many people would even have a nickname for this lengthy, comprehensive collection of words. But Bill DeForest does. He calls it the "OFD," by the way.

DeForest was a senior in high school when he became part of a group of regional scholars. Being a regional scholar required him to go to one scholar class a day and then spend the rest of his time doing an unlikely task.

"You have to sit by these fire alarms all day except for lunch and one class for the regional scholars. I didn't mind skipping class after that," the VTSU Castleton graphic design professor said.

He would often head over to SUNY Adirondack, a college near him in New York, to fill up the time he didn't spend sitting next to the fire alarm. He would peruse all the books and randomly pick one to read. The visits sparked his curiosity and inspired him to read books he would have never picked up otherwise. He was interested in many topics.

DeForest described his high school self as "shy" and a bit of a "misfit." But misfits are always bound to find each other, especially in high school.

"Eight or nine of us found each other. We called ourselves The 641 Club, which is the case of Matt's beer plus tax," DeForest said, reminiscing.

The band of misfits hung out together at their pal Ed-

die's.

"It was a farm outside of town with no parental supervision. That's where we would go to hang out. Ed Manor," DeForest said matter-of-factly.

He said he has kept in touch and remained best friends with almost all of the 641 Club members – except for Ed.

"He's missing now. No one can find him; he's just gone. Disappeared. We're still searching for him," DeForest said glumly.

DeForest's typical outfit in high school was almost the same every day.

"Levi jeans, work boots, a tee-shirt, and a denim jacket," he said.

He mimics this outfit decades later but switched the tee-shirt for "a short sleeve button-up front shirt."

"I never learned how to dress myself well," DeForest said, laughing and throwing his hands up in defeat.

Colby Tucker, a graphic design major and student at VTSU Castleton, has a personal relationship with DeForest outside of academics.

"Bill's my advisor. He started as my teacher, not really knowing if graphic design was it, and then I met Bill. He guided me through all of it. He runs the Content Lab, a club that I'm a part of. We're closer than just advisors and students. I think we're genuine friends," Tucker said.

Tucker was unsure how to describe Bill; there were no right words to truly show his character.

"Between you and me, I am working on a theory about time and the universe. BUT, it

is backed by physicists," DeForest remarked during an interview.

Unfortunately, the details are classified.

"He's someone you need to meet for yourself," Tucker said, laughing. "He introduced himself to me as the reverend of the Church of the Spiral Love Jelly," Tucker said.

DeForest discovered an online form to create your own church, and he knew that it needed to be his next adventure. He became the official ordained minister of his very own church, The Church of the Spiral Love Jelly.

"He's out there, and it's easy to get engaged with him. That's what happened to me," Tucker added.

Like Tucker, many people began to interact and meet Bill through the graphic design program, but graphic design doesn't limit Bill and his creativity.

"I was living in Ithaca, New York. I was living a great life on a communal farm, bartending, painting, and teaching as an adjunct instructor in painting. My life was hilariously good," DeForest recalled.

But, he knew that this picturesque life couldn't last forever.

"I could see the writing on the wall and knew it wasn't going to last forever. I thought I should have some commercial art training, and I thought that medical illustration would fill that need," DeForest added.

He went to the Rochester Institute of Technology to pursue a master's in Medical Illustration with a concentration in computer graphics.



COURTESY OF WILLIAM DEFOREST

DeForest's cat Charlie with his lengthy outdoor tunnel behind him.

The coursework in this major included pre-med coursework, which involved human dissection.

"It was amazing, it was life-changing. It didn't answer some of the fundamental life questions, but it blew my mind," he said.

"The medical illustration program was where I first encountered Adobe creative products. My first love was Illustrator," DeForest said, sighing.

Medical illustration allowed him to explore other forms of art and sparked his creativity.

"That's when I got wicked into graphic design. I learned to love the white space. I love type, I love color, I love arranging things," he said. "In my se-

cret real life, I do paintings and drawings. I drew the human figure a lot, but now I mostly paint flowers."

DeForest lives in Poultney, Vermont. He bought his house in 2019. It was his very first home.

And his home is what every Vermonter dreams of. A picturesque piece of land with super tall maple trees. He describes his home as "parklike" as the maple trees line the land.

His home is complete with his art studio, something he never owned before. A place for his art, a place for him to explore his talents and become immersed in his "secret real life."

See 'Bill' on page 6

Balling on a budget: holiday edition

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Balling on a Budget is a blog devoted to saving college students money. This week we are talking about holiday savings and how to keep it festive and reasonable!

With the holiday season coming up, we need to be prepared. As we all know, the holiday season is known for breaking the bank. Between getting that sweet pair of boots "for your sister" on Black Friday and finding your partner the perfect gift, things can get pretty pricey. Here are some must-know hacks on how to cruise through this season on a budget.

The Creative Gift: Do-It-Yourself Presents

Nobody needs another pair of socks, let's face it (unless they are themed socks, in which case, please). Get creative and embrace your inner Picasso! Homemade presents can be both sentimental and humorous. Think about creating something unique and personalized:

Customized mugs: Take a basic mug from Walmart and some Sharpies, then let your creative side run wild. The hand-drawn portrait of your friend appearing like a potato will be a hit with them.

Baked goods: Baking is a science experiment that results

in deliciousness, and everyone loves cookies or brownies. No fruit cake, though; no one likes a fruit cake.

Jars of memory: Put some inside jokes and amusing memories in a jar. This will make your friends and family laugh more than a dad joke because it's the idea that matters.

Framed photos: You know what my mom and grandmother love more than anything: a framed photo. You can print out pictures from Walmart for 65 cents, no joke. Then get a cute frame from Dollar General and you're golden. That family photo from your trip to the beach will be a hit!

Group Gifts for Secret Santa: Combine Your Resources

Get rid of the stress that comes with giving gifts alone. Get your friends together for a group gift or a Secret Santa! You can purchase something special for your best friend without going over your entire holiday budget if you set a budget (say \$20).

If you're feeling particularly festive, make it a "white elephant" gift exchange to add a unique touch. Who wouldn't like a funny garden gnome or a half-used candle that has a photo of Jesus on it? Just be ready for some friendly theft when exchanging gifts!

Budget-Friendly Holiday Events

The holiday season can feel

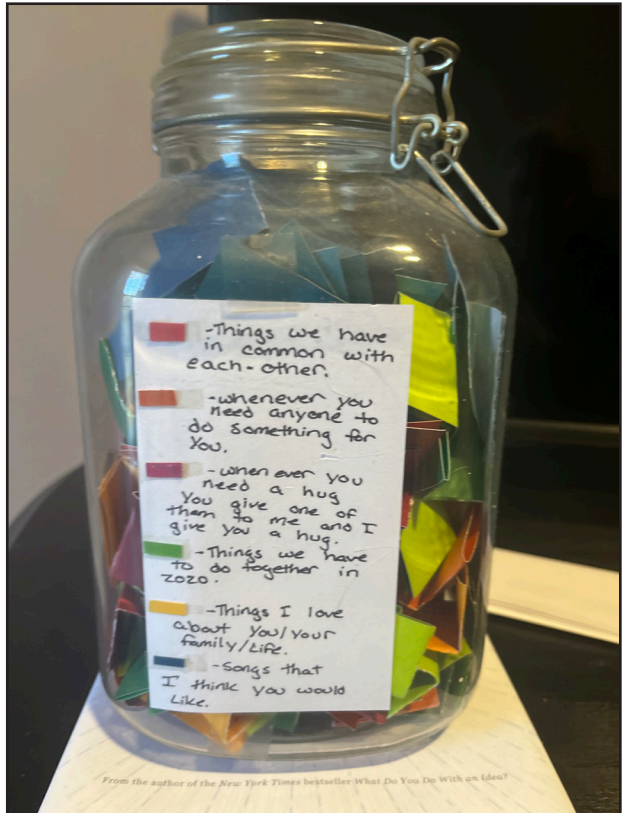
like a never-ending series of parties and events that require serious cash. But it doesn't have to be that way! Check out Castleton's calendar for free events, hosted by different groups on campus. Think holiday markets, tree lighting ceremonies, or even movie nights. Castleton has a holiday fair downtown every year where you can get cheap gifts that families will love.

Are you feeling ambitious? You can host your event! Grab a hot chocolate, whip up some popcorn, and binge-watch holiday movies in your dorm like Charlie Brown Thanksgiving or Elf. Ensure you're stocked up on the good snacks—those are non-negotiable.

Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and Student Discounts

It's coming up quickly! Since Halloween has passed, Thanksgiving is right around the corner, which means Black Friday deals are already on the rise. Make the most of your student discounts. What is the point of college without that student discount?

Since you are a student, you are eligible for many discounts! Student pricing is available at numerous establishments, including big brands like American Eagle, Nike, Aeropostale, Amazon, Apple, and plenty more. For more local ideas, Cloud 9 Cannabis in Fair Haven gives Castleton students a 10% discount on all purchases.



MADDIE LINDGREN

A DIY jar full of memories and momentos given as a heartfelt Christmas gift.

es... just saying! Wave your ID around and see the costs drop, it's like having a magic wand!

Remember that spreading joy doesn't have to cost a fortune this holiday season. With a little DIY imagination, some savvy planning, and a little comedy, you can celebrate in

style without making your bank account sound like a depressing holiday carol. So, grab that hot cocoa, pull on your favorite sweater, and enjoy the benefits of being a college student. I wish you a happy holiday season and continued success with your savings!

Three artists present their senior exhibition

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

Immediately upon entering the Fine Arts Center, students, faculty and guests are struck with three captivating fine art collections displayed on the walls of the Christine Price Gallery.

The Senior Exhibiton 2024, comprised of work from senior artists Julie Griffith, Jorja McLeod and Matthew Stoddard, was assembled the week-end of Nov. 9 after months of planning, preparation and support from fine art professors Oliver Schemm and Phil Whitman to fulfill their Senior Exhibition graduation requirement.

“As we were putting up this show, people would come into the Fine Arts Center, and both students and faculty and visitors would literally stop in their tracks and be kind of taken aback by the scale of the work,” said Whitman. “That’s something that doesn’t always happen.”

Griffith, McLeod and Stoddard each have their own section of the gallery, which are simultaneously very different yet contain relationships and parallels with one another.

“All three of these seniors have different styles that I think work well together in this group show, but there is an energy and immediacy that is emanating from all the work that binds them together,” Schemm said.

Stoddard said he is inspired by “decay and time” and explained how his interests have broadened over time, beginning with abstract and then to surrealism, cubism, and contemporary styles. He has many different mediums on display as well, ranging from painting to sculpture, printmaking and digital art.

When discussing his multi-



The Senior Art Exhibit is currently on display until Dec. 21 in the Christine Price Gallery of the Fine Arts Center, showcasing work from Matthew Stoddard, left, Jorja McLeod, and Julie Griffith, right.

media 3D paintings, which include recycled materials such as Styrofoam, he explained that he “is very much into texture” and creating “ugly art.”

“[It’s about] Finding the beauty in old things, discarded things. Decay. Stuff that people have forgotten, and I kind of relate that to people who are downtrodden in society. Like the homeless, people struggling with drug use and stuff like that. People that society sort of ignores and kind of hides and wants to put away.”

Stoddard is grateful to Whitman and Schemm for teaching him new techniques, especially with creating 3D art, and said group critiques and collaboration during classes has been “incredibly valuable.”

Griffith noted how the “organic feel” of Stoddard’s work is similar to her own and went in-depth about her display entitled “Sea Level,” also containing her “Surfer Series.”

She revealed that the “Surfer Series,” a colorful, mixed

media body of work spanning the larger of her two wall spaces, originated while at the beach with her daughter.

“Three years ago, I went to the ocean with my daughter for the first time in the spring, and I saw this gentleman out on a surfboard waiting for a wave, and he was like the only one in the water because it was so cold. And it really struck me how detached he was from everything going on, all the craziness in the world. He was only just waiting for the wave,” she said.

Griffith immediately went home and drew the man from memory, thus originating a puzzle of imaginative scenes and characters that are “up for interpretation.”

“Sea Level” on the other hand, is mostly comprised of on-site portraits of her friends and family, tying in a sense of reality.

“There was something about the surfer series that was really pretty and took a ton

more time to apply the layers of paint and everything, but something was missing. But when I put them next to the portraits of my family, which are often really quickly done... they seem really meaningful compared to the surfer series.”

She said that learning to draw on site has been a “game changer,” and talked about the business skills she has learned at Castleton including portfolios and artists CVs they each made for the exhibit.

McLeod created a unique overlap with Griffith by including a portrait of her in her collection themed after social issues and mental illnesses.

“I’m really excited to be able to show all my work at once. Some people have seen a few of these pieces, but for the most part I’ve kept them kind of hidden away. They are very personal, and they needed to be shown together,” she said.

McLeod delves into a range of difficult subjects through her work, including depression,



CURTESY JULIE GRIFFITH

grief, body dysmorphia and loneliness. But she offers hope through specific pieces as well.

One of her favorite paintings is titled, “Look at Me,” which depicts lines representing stimulus overload and phrases often said to those with autism. Another, “Uncertainty,” is a self-portrait surrounded by hurtful things said to her personally.

McLeod shared that a specific goal of her work is to not be hyper-realistic.

“I still want it to look like a painting and not a photograph,” she said.

She named the Woolridge art house and Whitman and Schemm’s honest feedback as two driving factors in her artistic development.

“They’re always hard on us, and they always push us to do our best. If something’s not right with the artwork, they will tell you straight up about it...I appreciate that,” she said.

Schemm and Whitman expressed great pride in the

exhibit and these students’ growth throughout their time at Castleton.

“It has been a joy to work with these student-artists over the years, watching them find their artistic voice. Seeing them have stylistic breakthroughs and frustrations overcome. Mainly it’s watching them evolve to find their themes and visual vocabulary and building a body of work they are proud of,” said Schemm.

“We’re always proud of our senior shows, but this one is really exemplary,” added Whitman.

On Sunday, Dec. 8 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Stoddard, Griffith, and McLeod will host a reception for the exhibit in the Christine Price Gallery with flashmob at 6:30. There will be music, refreshments, and a chance to answer questions about their artwork. They welcome all to attend!

‘Once Upon A Mattress’ reimagines a classic

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Attending VTSU Castleton’s performance of “Once Upon a Mattress” was like walking into a fairy tale that got a little confused on its path to happily ever after—and I mean that in the best way possible. This three-hour adventure, which played from Nov. 14-17, was an elaborate retelling of “The Princess and the Pea,” complete with head-bobbing songs, funny characters, and a few moments that had you checking your watch.

The story revolves around Princess Winifred (“Fred” to her pals), who arrives in a kingdom with a no-marriage policy set by the intrusive Queen Aggravain. She’s introduced as the next contender to marry the desperate Prince Dauntless, but Fred is no average princess—she’s loud, unrefined, and, quite frankly, a queen in her own right. Watching her march to her drum (and swim an actual moat) was empowering and refreshing. The actress, Kathryn Osburn, played Winifred with fierce charm, making every scene she appeared in an optimistic performance.

Then there’s the strange relationship between Prince Dauntless and his mother, Queen Aggravain. Let us face the elephant in the room: their relationship was ... awkward. The queen’s obsession with keeping Dauntless to herself was so intense that it felt like a mama’s boy fever dream. However, props to the actors, Vidur Katyal and Siobhan Gallagher, for nailing this bizarre, unpleasant tension. The Queen’s dramatic dominance was cringe-worthy and captivating, and Dauntless’ eventual rebellion against his mother was satisfyingly enjoyable. When he eventually stood up to

his mother, the audience practically cheered and gasped—because we’d had enough of Aggravain’s controlling behavior.

Now, for the comedy standouts: the Jester, the Wizard, Prince Harry, and the Minstrel. These four stole every scene they were in, injecting much-needed brightness and excellent comedic timing into the show. The Jester’s antics and silly songs were witty and foolish, and the Wizard’s dry wit had the audience applauding. Prince Harry’s exaggerated chivalry and the Minstrel’s hilarious commentary gave the show a spark that kept it moving during its more drawn-out sections. But let’s not forget the King, who added an unexpected layer of comedy to the show. His character, cursed to be mute, relied on excessive physical humor that involved running around trying to “catch” women and get handsy. The actor, Hunter Day, was committed to the role of the King and brought uncomfortable to the stage.

Three hours is a long time to sit through any play, let alone one as openly whimsical as this. There were times when the speed slowed, and it felt like happily ever after would never come. However, the vibrant musical numbers and the cast’s dedication to the story drew us back.

Overall, “Once Upon a Mattress” was a mixed collection of wonderfully strange characters, awkward relationships, and some killer voices. It isn’t every day that you get to see a princess storm a castle (or a moat) while a jester and wizard argue in the background. While the play may have slightly overstayed its welcome, the cast’s charisma and the sheer ridiculousness of the plot made for one of the best plays that’s taken the stage yet.



MARTIN VAN BUREN III

Once Upon a Mattress hit the Casella stage last week, based on the classic tale “Princess and the Pea.”

Blog: It’s all consuming

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Hi! I’m Jess. I want to start consciously consuming media. And I want to help you do the same! I’m so sick of mindlessly scrolling on my phone, refusing to have a say on what I see and how it affects me. From now on I will be very purposeful with the books, films, articles, music, art, photography and podcasts I consume.

Listen up!
On YouTube I watched the Sierra Ferrell Tiny Desk Concert. She’s a folk and bluegrass singer. I listened to her music

while I was in London because her style of singing reminded me of home. Her Tiny Desk Concert was insane. Her voice live is incredible. I especially loved her performance of American Dreaming. I would cry if I saw her live in person.

Reading (except I’m not really enjoying it right now)

I’ve been reading this book called “No One Belongs Here More Than You” by Miranda July. It’s a collection of short stories and they get increasingly weird as you go along. I don’t remember exactly where this book was recommended, but for a while I was

into some super weird literature where everything is just me of home. Her Tiny Desk Concert was insane. Her voice live is incredible. I especially loved her performance of American Dreaming. I would cry if I saw her live in person.

Movies!

I watched the movie X which is an A24 horror/thriller. And, um no one told me it was

a lot of porn and a lot of blood so that was actually shocking. I’ve been on a bit of a streak of encountering weird sexually disturbing media (refer to “No One Belongs Here More Than You”). Jenna Ortega’s character got her finger cut off and Mia Goth’s character was sexually assaulted by an old woman, but the old hag having missionary sex with her bag of bones husband could be considered the most frightening scene. I don’t mean it in an ageist way, but they were both covered in the blood of those they killed so like I don’t feel that bad for calling them old

okay. From my understanding, the premise of the movie is that when you age, you’re no longer attractive and your husband won’t have sex with you or else he’ll have a heart attack, and then you’re so horny that you kill people for some sort of satisfaction. A really hopeful and inspiring film.

Erm, you guys should check out Substack

I’ve been into Substack for a while, but I only recently started investing more time into the website. Substack is a website where writers and other content creators can publish newsletters of all their work.

You can subscribe to people’s blogs and donate money to help them out. I found some of my favorite small authors on Substack and I recently started publishing my own stuff on there. It’s a really low-pressure way to get your work out there but it feels more intentionally than say, Instagram or TikTok. It’s also really cool to know there are other writers out there who all relate to the same things. There’s something on Substack for everyone and it’s really inspiring.

Big reward is being offered for the killer of a bald eagle

By Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Five thousand dollars is always a respectable amount of money. That is precisely the reward the Vermont Fish and Game Commission offers the public for any information leading to a suspect for a crime that occurred on October 15. The crime committed wasn't just some crime. However, this event resulted in the death of a bald eagle. Officials

discovered that the Bald Eagle found near East Street in Bridport, Vermont, died from a gunshot wound. According to NBC 5, Investigators found metal pellets and wounds on the Bald Eagle that consistently gave off evidence of shotgun wounds. In addition, the bald eagle did have a research band on its leg. The band indicates that researchers have observed the bird in Vermont since August 2006. NBC 5 also recorded the thoughts of Warden Detective

Sergeant David Taddei: "Right now, we do not have a lot of information. We've done knocks and talks in the area surrounding residences," he said, "Basically, any leads that will generate a suspect for us, that's what we're looking for." (Haliaeetus leucocephalus), more formally known as the American Bald Eagle is a trendy animal. The bird has quite the reputation of being famous and is constantly linked to human ideas such as freedom and strength. The species is one

great example of a comeback story in conservation and is frequently used to show the benefits of working with a species population threatened with endangerment. The Bald Eagle population is so high that they were officially taken off the Endangered Species Act in August 2007. However, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the American Bald Eagle is still protected federally by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In addition, the species is

also protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. NBC 5 also states that the financial mentality for killing an Eagle in this manner can range between 15,000 and 100,000 dollars. In the end, there is no excuse for killing an American Bald Eagle. I genuinely hope that they find whoever did this, and I hope that whoever killed this beautiful animal finds their way in life. If you ever have a conflict with wildlife, don't hesi-

tate to contact your local fish and wildlife service. Wildlife experts would be more than happy to help you with any situation. The only situations I can think of that would be acceptable to kill a wild animal is if you are being attacked, are hunting, or accidentally hit an animal with your car. Killing a wild animal just for something to do is the purest form of stupidity and ignorance I can think of.

Bill:

"The walls are bright yellow and the ceiling is white and there are drawings and paintings of flowers," Tucker said. The yellow and white illuminate the studio making the space big and bright, an artist's dream. "An artist actually lived there before me. She put on some of the crazy patterns and paint, and I just went with them," DeForest adds. Unfortunately, his house has yet to be visited by his family. "They have not and will not make it up to Vermont to see my first ever home, my home. They just can't get it together," DeForest said without elaboration. But, DeForest has good company at home. Charlie is a creamy white, short haired cat, with three legs. According to DeForest, Charlie is the "heart and soul" of his home. Charlie is obviously well-tended-to and valued. He has his own personal fountain which he loves, and even though Charlie isn't technically allowed outside, DeForest makes exceptions. "He's a bit of a captive, I can't bring myself to let him just go outdoors anymore so I bought these mesh tunnels, it's like a cat habitrail," DeForest describes. The mesh tunnels are doz-

ens of feet long, extending throughout DeForest's backyard, with a large tent at the end that Charlie can visit as he pleases. Bill's house is a quick 15-minute jaunt from where he teaches, which makes it ideal with his busy schedule. His job is hectic and sometimes it seems like the emails never stop coming. "Email, Email, Email," DeForest said of how his day starts and ends the same way. "It seems that during the semester, the day and the week are never done. You get home and think of everything you need to do and the weekend comes and you try to get ready for the next week," DeForest said, smiling through the pain. But like many hardworking individuals, coffee keeps DeForest afloat. Tucker noted how Bill always had a coffee cup in his hand or at least within close proximity of him. "The secret that most people don't know is that I only drink decaf. I can't handle full caffeine, you don't want to see me. If I drink full caffeine I'm a fiend, it's too much. People think I'm a little wired already so full caffeine would be no good," DeForest laughed. DeForest started teaching at Castleton in 2017, and students

from the university like Zoe Ukasik flocked to his classes. "I heard about him before I even knew him. He's got a chaotic energy, and I like it. That's what makes him different from other teachers, and that's why I wanted to take a class with him. The chaos keeps you engaged," Ukasik said, smiling. Ruben Somda has only taken one class with him, but the impact he has had on their life is long-lasting. "He treats me like he knows me personally, which is something that I really appreciate when people do that. He is very invested in people," Somda said. Sam Davis-Boyd, a colleague in the Communications Department, describes him as "one of the most kind and energetic and friendly people that I know. I can't go anywhere with Bill without him, like, stopping to talk to pretty much almost every single person he meets because he knows everyone," Davis-Boyd said. Davis-Boyd told how after she was first hired to work at Castleton University. She was living in California and needed to find housing near the university, but it was hard to actually look for a place for obvious reasons. "Bill was in the process of purchasing a home in Poul-



COURTESY BILL DEFOREST
Professor DeForest dressed up as a Star Wars Jedi.

ney that had an attached apartment that he was planning to rent out. And he very kindly, before his own deal had even gone through, said, 'As long as the deal goes through, y'all can live here,'" Davis-Boyd recalled. The first year of her and her wife's life at Castleton was spent living in an apartment attached to his home.

"He even made it part of the deal that me and my partner were able to move in early before he was even able to move," Davis-Boyd said thankfully. This speaks to DeForest's character. He has never known a stranger. Somda reflects on the time DeForest and they went to Ireland to visit an Oscar-winning graphic designer for film, which is a whole other story in itself. DeForest allowed Somda and another student named Wes Simard to "do their own thing" and explore on their own. "The amount of times we would leave for the day, come back, and he'd come in and be like, 'Oh, I just met my friend at a pub or something,' or he would say, 'I went pub crawling, met an artist on the street, and we drew together.' He just knows everyone," Somda remarks. Davis-Boyd agreed. "Like, he just... he is somebody that gets to know pretty much everybody that crosses his path and, like, genuinely wants to know people and about them and get to know them. And it's just so, like, great to see and just endearing," she said. Above everything, DeForest believes in beauty. In fact, the best day of his life was

because of the simple and true beauty around him. DeForest was on a run one day, as he typically did. All of a sudden he saw an incredibly large bird. He described the appearance of the bird to a raptor. "I'm watching it as I'm running and I see that it's headed to the harbor. I ran to the end of a long pier where they used to store the buoys. There was nothing but me and the lake," DeForest recalled. "I looked to the right and there was a snow owl, about three feet away from me. There was a full moon. The sun was setting on the left. I remember it well." DeForest describes these moments of beauty as "small little beads" in his life. Beauty is something that remains consistent. Beauty is something that will be remembered. "Between you and me, I think the fact that we can all appreciate beauty is a really important and powerful feature. Even two enemies can look at something beautiful and have power. I think at the end of your life, if you were given a choice—if you could have all the toys and money, all the power and money, or true beauty—we all would choose to see beauty before we go," he said.

Board:

Also (discussed) on Monday night, the board revealed the draft 2025-2026 operating budget. Residents can expect a 2.9% or a 7.6% tax jump depending on if the budget includes a \$200,000 increase for highway paving and fire department reserves. The 2.9% increase is the result of a \$124,611 increase stemming mostly for wage and benefits increases, said Town Manager Mike Jones. "That's a low number, \$124,000 dollars, we've only done that one other time in the last six years," Jones said. If paving and fire department reserve costs are included, the increase would be \$324,611 representing the 7.6% increase. The total proposed budget for 2025-2026 is \$4,384,951, up from last year's budget of \$4,238,000. In a follow up interview, Jones said the operating budget was "pretty bare bones" and there is little to no unnecessary expenditures. "We've cut that [the budget] down so much over the last six years that there's not much to cut anymore," he said.

In other news: •The board deliberated on whether or not to continue maintaining three private roads: Higgins, Cedar Mountain, and Gump. One road used to house a disabled child, and the town needed to ensure the school bus had access during the winter months. Another road provides access to a town sewer, while the third one is split between town (state) land and private property. "We either need to maintain all private roads, or we need to maintain none," stated Selectman Steele. •Chris Immel, the town's former tree warden, cited concerns about eight overhanging trees on Main Street. "They either need to be pruned out or cut down because they're a danger. We've had trees falling on people," he said. •The board reappointed Police Chief Peter Mantello as Emergency Services Voter and Mike Jones as Emergency Manager Director as Castleton's representatives to the Regional Emergency Management Committee •The Castleton Fire Department will withhold an \$800 payment to McGee Ford after not receiving a trailer hitch despite purchasing a tow package.

Jana:

"I remember her out by the road with her big belly and waving people in," said Blow, who at the time was leading the holiday drive as part of a Media Ethics class. "It made an impact on me." Marty Kelly, current SGA graduate assistant at VTSU Castleton, DeCamilla's former Media Ethics classmate and current Strategic Marketing Management classmate, remembers her being the first Castleton student he got to see in person that year. "It said a lot about her that she was willing to drive an hour out of her way to volunteer with a baby at home and being pregnant," Kelly said. But DeCamilla is always putting others before herself, including student Lance Robinson, from Blow's Media Writing class that produced the book "COVID Chronicles." DeCamilla was part of the College Steps program and would meet with Robinson on Zoom once a week to help him stay on track with assignments. "I just always want to help and give back," DeCamilla said. DeCamilla, who was not enrolled in the class, was asked by Blow if she wanted to be included in the book because of how driven Blow said she was. She jumped at the chance and wrote about her old car and the drives to escape she took with her son during COVID. When the end of 2021 finally rolled around it was time for DeCamilla to graduate—but she wasn't alone. Three weeks prior, she had birth to her second child, Monarch. "I was so sad we couldn't have an in-person graduation, I wanted to bring this little nugget," DeCamilla said, while holding up her now 3-year-old daughter who was wearing a yellow and black sunflower dress with Band-aids on both knees from falling earlier that day. But her graduation wasn't where her education ended. The now 29-year-old is back at VTSU Castleton working at her MBA in business communication. "She is a nontraditional student but was always very focused when coming back because she loves getting the most out of everything," said Talbott.

Career

Toward the end of her first stint at Castleton DeCamilla got an internship at the Chaffee Art Center in Rutland, Vermont. The director of the Art Center later offered her a makeshift position because of how much

she loved the neon haired bubbly gal. DeCamilla wasn't sure what to do, so she went back to waiting tables. About a month back into the world of rude customers, under tippers, and cleaning up disgusting messes, DeCamilla received the text that would shape her whole career. Imessage from Dave Blow: "Hey, there's an opening at the Post-Star." "Ugh, I don't wanna live in Glens Falls forever, and I don't even know if I wanna work in news," DeCamilla said re-enacting her initial thoughts. Despite the hesitation, she applied for a reporter position. After only a week, it was clear to DeCamilla that her heart was in the news. Later into the 2023 year, DeCamilla set a goal for herself; "Within the next five years, I want to break into broadcasting," she said. "That was weird because that had never crossed my mind before." Her professors weren't surprised. "She always sets high goals for herself. It is fun and exciting to see her journey in what she is doing," said Davis-Boyd.

After just six months, DeCamilla got her current job as digital content producer at WRGB CBS6 News in Albany and was soon pregnant with child number three. Daily tasks now include website reporting, working ahead on projects, some managerial tasks for the assignment desk. But she wanted more. "I wanted a passion project," DeCamilla said. In April 2024, Evidence Room was born and what started off as something she was going to dabble with, is now a successful podcast with 23 episodes focusing on the nitty gritty of cold cases. "I call it my fourth child," DeCamilla said with pride.

Family

Episode one of Evidence Room came out the same week DeCamilla's father passed away. The strong mother of three and new fiancée did not stop when things got hard, but Instead, she overcame. "I'm gonna make him proud. I like to think that the Evidence Room is for him," DeCamilla said, through tears. Her father knew about her podcast and even though he couldn't watch it on YouTube, she knows he is somewhere seeing it. The mother of three children, Cire, Monarch and Kenzo, also recently got engaged to her longtime partner Stakk M Kennedy.



COURTESY JANA DECAMILLA

Before meeting Kennedy, the single mom at the time would walk down the street while pushing Cire in his stroller. It was to her surprise that Kennedy used to see her and knew that someday "she was gonna be his girl." In December of 2018, DeCamilla and Kennedy officially met through mutual friends. After a month of hanging out and becoming each other's companions, they both knew there was something more there than a friendship. Fast forward to the end of 2021, when DeCamilla and Kennedy had their first child together, Monarch. DeCamilla's first child, Cire, is 8-and-a-half years old and known as the family politician. He will debate with anyone until he gets them to agree with him. "I never met a young child so political with their answers," DeCamilla added. Cire is from her previous relationship. She met his father when she was 12 and had their baby boy at age 21. Her first tattoo was the father's name and was placed on her left shoulder. Now, it's covered by a big, beautiful, yellow flower that took three sessions to complete. "That tattoo was the last pain I had to feel from that relationship. Now I have this big beautiful thing, and an amazing boy to replace all the bad mem-

ories," DeCamilla said, giving a tour of her tattoos. Monarch, 3, the middle baby. The sweet-mannered toddler has an incredible love for animals and already knows she wants to be a vet when she grows up. "People come up to me and say that she is the sweetest kid. She will come up and rub your face while telling you how beautiful you are," DeCamilla said. Kenzo is the youngest at 2. He is "out of this world smart," can hold complete sentences, state the whole alphabet, and tell you that his favorite shape, the triangle, has three sides with three angles, DeCamilla said. Kenzo also happens to be the last of DeCamilla's children...ever. She had a medical scare when he was born, with both of them in danger. Kenzo is now known in the family as being the happiest baby ever. "We always say how he is the definition of just happy to be here, literally," DeCamilla shared. DeCamilla explained how one of her favorite things that she carried into her motherhood was a favorite childhood memory of watching movies as a family in the living room. "I'm like come on guys, let's watch a movie. Then we all pile on in my bed," DeCamilla said while smiling at her

children. The family of five lives in a three-bedroom apartment between Albany and Saratoga. The white doors of the kids' rooms are decorated with a theme of their choice. Monarch's door is covered in pink and purple stickers matching the color of the LED lights that cover her bedroom walls, surrounding her room full of toys. "I have been told it looks like a toy store," DeCamilla said of not only the bedroom but the whole house. While DeCamilla answered questions, Monarch and Kenzo were on her lap, screaming for attention. "The Nightmare Before Christmas" movie was on TV, DeCamilla's phone is repeatedly buzzing with work messages. "I apologize for the caffeine induced giggles," DeCamilla said. Kennedy walks into the bedroom to finally save DeCamilla from their screaming children. "What's poppin?" he said. Now, finally getting relief from the piercing screams of her overly tired kids, she said through a yawn, "I'm going to try and take a nap while these children rest. I feel like I'm 29 going on 45."

New look this season for women’s hoops

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Behind the doors of Glenbrook Gym on Nov. 10, the Spartans women’s basketball team started their season on a high note by defeating in-state rivals, Norwich, 63-55.

Despite the quick start, the Spartans fell in both their games during the Cardinal Classic the following week where they took on Plattsburgh State losing 52-45 and SUNY Potsdam falling 59-45.

Leading the way for team in scoring this year so far has been junior Emily Adams, who is averaging 10 points and six rebounds a game so far. Adams is one of the few returning starters from last season.

The Spartans this season have a much different look than previous season after the graduation of Elise Magro,

however although it might be a different look the team is no longer struggling with limited numbers.

“We have a young team, no seniors with five freshmen with a roster of 11. That is big numbers for us though, and it’s huge we can practice and go five versus five unlike last year. We are working out the little things like talking and defense,” Adams said. “We lost two of our leading scores from last year, Liz (Bailey) and Elise, so we need pick it up on offense and have confidence when attacking the basket. We struggled with offense at the Plattsburgh tourney, but we all understand that we need to shoot the ball. I think we can be very successful this year once we adjust to our new team.”

Even with the young team and adjustments that are different from last season, the team continues to have high expectations.

“We’ve started a little slower than we would’ve liked but there is always room for us to improve on it. We have high expectations for ourselves, but other people don’t see us amounting to anything this year because of who we lost. This team is super close and we’re all ready to go out and prove people wrong this year,” said freshman Emily Trepanier.

The Spartans look to get back on track when they host the Spartan Classic on Nov 22-23, which will see the team host the University of Maine-Farmington and Hartwick College. The Spartans topped University of Maine-Farmington last season 59-42, however it might take a different approach this time as then the Spartans were led by their two headed monster of Magro and Bailey from last season.



CASTLETONSPORTS
Emily Adams, coming off a screen to drive the hoop against Norwich.

Spartans stellar season comes to an end

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

Coming off an impressive regular season, the Castleton field hockey team felt confident going into the LEC tournament. The team was riding a nine-game winning streak coming into their semifinal matchup against Southern Maine.

The Spartans won a nail biter against Southern Maine 2-1 to advance them into the championship. Senior captain Haley Lassen was encouraged by the gritty win.

“I think our win against Southern Maine showed our team has some fight because we had to come back in that game,” Lassen said.

Head coach Emily Douglas thought the defense is what ultimately prevailed the Spartans into their win against Southern Maine.

“I feel like we definitely played a defensive heavy game. Our defense is what really held us together in that game. You know, we had some good opportunities in front of the net and thank God we did, but it was a very back and forth game and our defense really held us together,” Douglas said.

The win sparked a rematch with Keene State in the championship game. They were able to defeat Keene 6-1 in a regular season matchup but the team knew they would get Keene’s best effort in the rematch. The game came down to the wire and the Spartans fell just short of claiming the LEC tournament championship, losing 3-2. Douglas sensed a disconnect within the team throughout portions of the championship game.

“Lack of connection, we just had an off day. There were moments where it was not the way we typically play and I think we just had about 5 to 7 minutes where it was evident we weren’t able to recover from that,” Douglas said.

Although execution wasn’t on par with what Douglas was looking for, she believed the



Jess Smithson, left, celebrates after one of the Spartans goals against Keene State. the Spartans gather together to celebrate after bringing the game to within one, right.



KATIE STAGER

girls played their hearts out to win that game.

“I mean it, there’s nothing that I could really say that was going to make them feel better. It wasn’t the outcome that any of us wanted. I don’t believe that anyone could walk away and say they didn’t give everything they had. It wasn’t a lack of effort,” Douglas said. “It was a lack of connection but I told them, you hold your head high because we were still regular season champs, we still hosted this championship, and yeah it was a really close game but there’s no regrets after that.”

Graduate assistant Alexis Ruiz felt the team had a phenomenal season and that they should be proud of how much they were able to accomplish. Although they weren’t able to accomplish their ultimate goal,

Ruiz has kept spirits high.

“I definitely had given them their space after the championship loss just because it was on our home turf and obviously, we don’t get rewarded for second so I definitely let them have their time to themselves,” Ruiz said. “When the girls have been coming in for their meetings or seeing them in the hallway, I’ve been congratulating whoever won their accolades and letting them know that we have time for next year. And obviously for the captains just telling them that they did everything they can,” Ruiz added.

Throughout the season, Ruiz was appreciative of the trust built within the coaching staff. Being a former player, Ruiz recognizes how things vary over the course of a season. Having the ability to make

adjustments and putting trust in both the coaching staff and players was notable.

“Trust as a whole from both the coaching staff and the girls was valuable with us working together and developing that trust coming into the season till the end of the season,” Ruiz said. “Whether it’s film or how they played, anything in that realm, I think trust was definitely built so that really helped within the season within the coaching staff and the players.”

As the team steps into the offseason, they believe they have the talent to put themselves back in contention for another shot at the LEC title next season. Lassen, who is an intense but compassionate leader, saw how mature this group of underclassmen handled themselves this season. She sees a bright future for the

team as they look to continue pushing a well-established culture.

“Moving forward, I wanna see more championships. I came into a rebuilding year as a first-year player and I think we’ve instilled the core values of honesty, trust, and respect for one another which has helped us be successful,” Lassen said. “The underclassmen this season stepped into leadership roles immediately and held each other accountable from day one. Most young players don’t feel comfortable taking on that responsibility but this class has shown the ability to drive their teammates.”

Douglas believes the team will be hungry and driven this offseason as the team looks to avenge a disappointing end to the 2024 season.

“I definitely think we’re

gonna focus a lot on improving our culture, especially as the season goes on. I think the culture kind of changes a little bit as the pressure gets put on,” Douglas said. “There’s a lot happening but being able to keep the culture that we emphasize and push in August all the way through November, I think we could work on that but I think just the fundamentals and our fitness is something we always focus on in the spring. A lot of us are going to really wanna put in additional work because we were right there this season and we know we could be right back in this position next fall so it’s important that we are consistent with our training and focus to help us have a better outcome next season.”

Women’s hockey off to solid start



CASTLETONSPORTS
Junior forward Meg Aiken getting set to take a faceoff against Albertus Magnus.

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton Women’s Ice Hockey team is underway in their season and off to a strong start of 3-1-1. Last season, the Spartans finished sixth in their conference and lost to Williams Smith in the first round of playoffs. This hasn’t sat well with the girls and they’ve made changes to ensure it.

The coaching staff brought in six freshmen this off-season; forwards Brooke Noble, Madeline Corrigan, and Caris Erickson. Defensemen Olivia Carter, and Morgan Arscott. Along with Goalie Gianna McCusker. Some are making an immediate impact.

The home opener was against Plymouth State on the Nov 6. Junior Rachel McNeil faced off against her own sister for what would be the last time. The Panthers had a quick start, scoring 23 seconds into the contest. They followed that up with another goal coming from the rival sister seven minutes later to go up 2-0. The Spartans rallied after the harsh first period with netminder Victoria Bakopanos not letting up another goal the rest of the way.

In the second period, freshman defenceman Olivia Carter

picked up her first NCAA goal in her first game to bring the game within one. Then in the dying minutes of the period, fifth-year Alex Johnson picked off a pass from a Panthers player for a breakaway which she slotted home five-hole. The third featured tight-checking and fast-paced play but the Spartans held the majority of possession. Yet, nobody could break the tie. Until, Alex Johnson once again gets sprung on a breakaway by a broken play and she made no mistake putting the puck up under the bar with authority. 3-2 come back completed in the home opener.

Just days later, our Spartans hosted The University of Southern Maine, an unofficial in-conference rivalry opponent. The two squads always compete in heated matches, resulting in a fun watch. These two games were no different. The first was an extremely tight 1-1 hockey game that went deep into a shootout. Moa Carlson, junior assistant captain and all-conference forward last season scored first for the Spartans. The Huskies bit back in the second to even it out and the rest of the way was scoreless. The shootout went six rounds but ultimately went the way of the Wolves. The game

Saturday evening was slightly more frustrating for our women in green. They fell 3-1 with the only goal coming from Carlson once again and too little too late.

This past weekend Albertus Magnus came to The Spartan Arena to face off. It was a blood bath on Friday with a victorious 12-3 effort from the girls. Captain Emery Bonner got in on the scoring for her first of the season and had three helpers, along with fellow assistant captain Meg Aiken who had a goal and two assists, and of course, Moa Carlson who tucked away her third of the year along with two apples. A mention should also be made to Junior forward Ellie Schliebener who had two goals and two assists and is a big part of the top line with Meg and Moa.

The girls came back the next day and came out with a 2-1 win in overtime. Freshman Brooke Noble scored first, she also had two goals and two assists the night before. Pretty good start to her career here. Albertus found a way to tie it in the second, but the girls would not go down. In overtime, Meg Aiken set up sophomore Taylor Adams for the winner. The weekend sweep bodes well for the girls moving forward.

Early season struggles for the Spartans

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The 2024–2025 season for the Spartans men’s hockey team has begun. It has been hard for the Spartans to get going this season since some of their key players have been unavailable.

Senior Bryce Irwin, will miss the remainder of the season due to a leg injury. Other guys have also had dislocated shoulders and ankle injuries, which are hopefully expected to heal shortly.

The first game was against Plattsburg and the second was against a new team, Keene State. Plattsburg was a tough game, as expected because they are the number 9 team in the nation. Despite goals from Dylan Roebuck, Justin Stairs, and Josef Vyvial, the Spartans struggled against the Cardinals, who outshot them 44-14. Plattsburgh scored twice, and the Cardinals capitalized on a

power-play and shorthanded goal, ultimately securing their victory with late goals in the second and third periods. The boys ultimately lost 6-3, but with an outstanding effort.

The next day they went on to play Keene State, a new hockey program that had just been started this year. The boys ended up tying Keene State 1-1 in regulation but lost 2-1 in a shootout. Castleton took the lead early in the game with a goal from Andrew Stefura, assisted by Emmett McHardy and Bryce Irwin. Keene equalized midway through the first period, and despite strong goaltending from Josh Ward, the game went to overtime and then a shootout. After a tied shootout round, Keene scored the game-winning goal giving them their first win in program history.

Due to a change in the scheduling, all conference teams will now face each other back-to-back this sea-

son. The Spartans faced the top-ranked Hobart College in their first back-to-back conference matchup. They lost 3-1 despite strong goaltending from Josh Ward, who made 33 saves, Hobart took a 2-0 lead in the second period. Castleton responded with a goal from Jackson Edwards in the third, but Hobart sealed the win with a third goal, handing the Spartans their first conference loss.

The next day the boys were very ready for another strong performance in hopes of securing their first conference win, but they fell short again, this time 3-0. Despite another strong performance from goaltender Josh Ward, who made 38 saves, it wasn’t enough. Josh Ward had some thoughts after the game, “I thought the team played hard, we showed what were capable of against one of the top teams in this country and we need to carry that out in the coming weeks.” Hobart scored the only goal

in the second period, and two more goals in the third sealed the victory. Hobart extended their unbeaten streak to 29 games and left the Spartans with another loss.

The Vermont State University Castleton men’s hockey team was defeated 3-2 by Albertus Magnus on the road Friday night in a New England Hockey Conference game. The match started fast, with Albertus taking a 1-0 lead early, followed by a quick equalizer from Dylan Roebuck for Castleton. After a solid performance by both goalies—Josh Ward making 28 saves for Castleton and Chance Hale stopping 32 shots for Albertus—the Falcons capitalized on a powerplay in the second period to regain the lead. They extended it further with another goal late in the period. Castleton made a strong push in the third, outshooting Albertus 13-3, but couldn’t find the equalizer. The loss marked Al-

bertus’ first conference win of the season.

The following day they were back but fell short in overtime. After Albertus took an early 1-0 lead, Castleton responded with a strong second period, including Luke Chakrabarti’s first collegiate goal and Cam Reid’s first of the season, giving the Spartans a 2-1 lead. Josef Vyvial added a powerplay goal to extend Castleton’s advantage to 3-1. Dominic Rodrigue had an impressive performance in net with 47 saves, but Albertus fought back in the third period, tying the game at 3-3. In overtime, Albertus capitalized on a rebound off a missed shot to secure the game-winner.

The boys are back at Spartan Arena, Nov. 22-23 playing Skidmore where they look to secure their first win of the season.



LUKAS DALFONSO Cedrick Theodore, 24 and Josh Ward celebrate.

The big jump from H.S. to D3

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

Sam Steinman was shocked coming into his freshman year of baseball at VTSU Castleton. After thinking he was a D1 talent after coming off an all-state final season in high school, he instead settled to play for Castleton’s D3 program.

But even D3 provided him with a huge reality check.

“Seeing how much bigger, stronger and faster everyone was, was eye opening,” Steinman said.

He had gone from on top of the world in high school to coming to the realization that, “No one in college is ass,” said friend Tyler Dubreuil, seated nearby during a recent interview.

High school sports were “more of a side quest,” for Emma Caskey, who plays on VTSU Castleton’s women’s lacrosse team. She was the best on her team in high school, and even “taught them how to play defense.” But when she got to college, she was on the bench with an injury and had a hard time transitioning due to the mental pressures of her college sport. Caskey soon came to realize sports in college were much more serious.

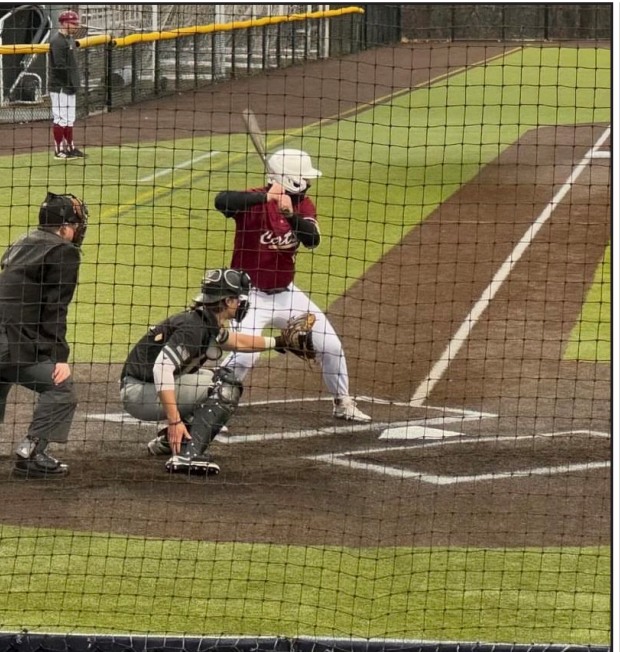
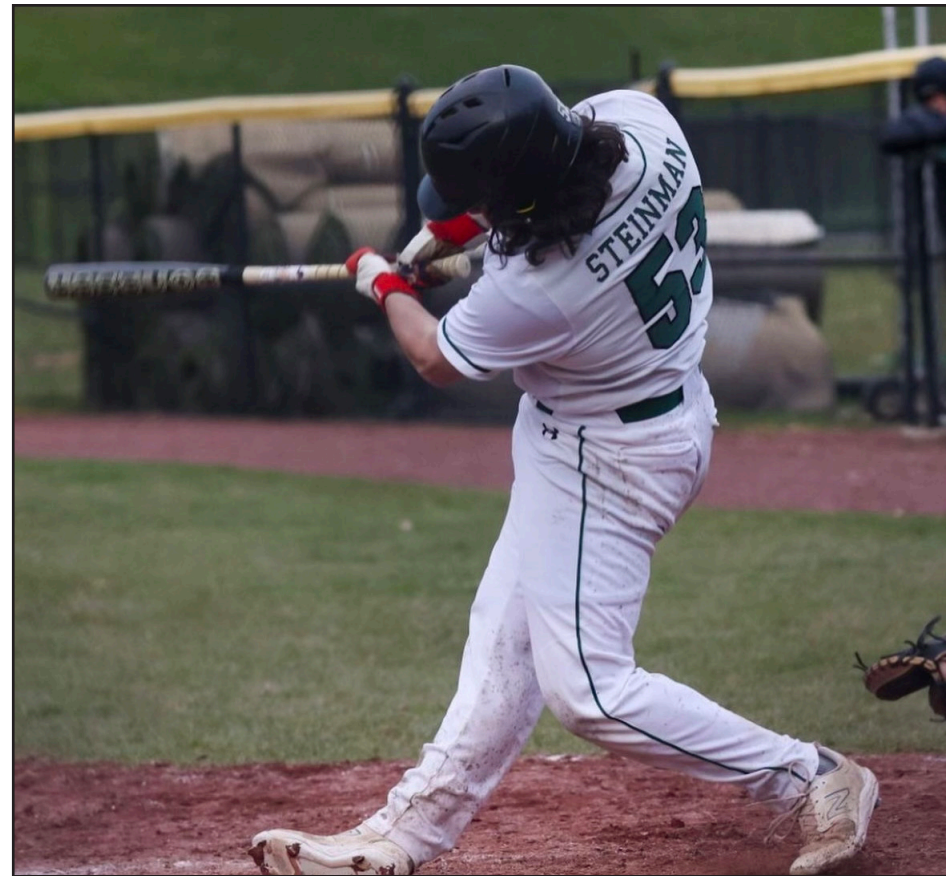
After interviewing 18 VTSU Castleton athletes, there was one thing that they all had in common: they all said the level of competition and intensity of practice and competition is so much greater in college.

The wrestling team is one of the most successful programs at VTSU Castleton and it all makes sense, because “the amount of intensity in that room is crazy,” said VTSU Castleton wrestler Desmond McLaughlin.

The wrestling team has managed to become a top 10 ranked program in the nation for D3 and it is directly related to that level of intensity they practice with, team members said.

Andrew Marchese, also known as the “Cheeseman,” said the transition from high school to wrestling for one of the top D3 wrestling teams in the country “was hard and my teammates pushed the pace but even the intensity of the wrestling room could not prepare the Cheeseman for the level of competition ahead of him as his welcome-to-college-wrestling moment came in his first ever college match. Marchese was seeded 5th and his opponent was not even seeded. Marchese said he thought he had an easy win and underestimated his opponent and got “walked.”

But the intensity of college



Baseball player Sammy Steinman top left, Jordan Hill and friend top right, basketball player Dyvan Hevey middle right, Emma-Claire Caskey lacross sophomore bottom right, catcher Micheal Lodge bottom middle, and wrestler Andrew Marchese bottom left.

sports is still prevalent regardless of the success of the program.

Dyvan Hevey is a first-year international student from Singapore who came to VTSU

Castleton to play on the basketball team that has struggled for years. Despite the team’s lack of success, he said the adjustment was huge.

“I’m still making adjustments. It’s hard” said Hevey, who comes from an Asian country where the average height is 5’6.”

He said he was a star on his team there and did not work as

hard and treated basketball like a hobby, because he focused on other things like girls and being popular.

“No one back home could play basketball out here,” he said, his voice rising.

The intensity change is not the only thing freshman athletes go through when they get to college. They say there is also a mental aspect to it that comes with the transition as well.

Jordan Hill, a junior on the VTSU Castleton softball team, felt looked down upon because she was a walk-on for the team

and felt like she was not on the same level as the upper-class students. The transition was very stressful for her.

Hill’s welcome-to-college moment came during her first game. She was playing first base and a ball was hit her way and she dropped it, leading to her getting yelled at by the coach making her even more stressed. But she brushed that off and quickly adjusted and became a starter the next season.

One of the biggest things high school athletes need to know about college sports is

the level of commitment that comes with it.

Tien Connor is an assistant coach for the VTSU Castleton women’s lacrosse team, who talked about how everyone is good in college and in order to keep up with the competition you must be committed to succeed.

“You need to commit to your sport like it was your career,” Mike Lodge said.

VTSU Castleton baseball player Mike Lodge went through a lot of struggles to the point where baseball did become like a job for him.

“But I love it” said Lodge.

Having to balance schoolwork, lifts and baseball was hard for him but he stayed with it and committed himself to the game, eventually earning a starting spot.

Regardless of sport or level, the transition from high school to college sports is never easy and athletes say it will come with many trials and tribulations, but everyone is there for a reason and that is to continue to grow and get better.

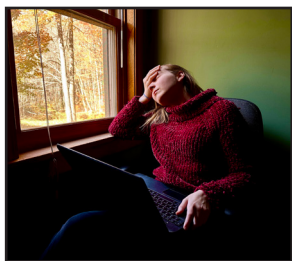
“It becomes your life when you get to college,” said VTSU Castleton player Mike Malloy.

Spartans end disappointing season at 3-7



Mike Morrissey, 8, helps out on a tackle against Western Connecticut in their last game, and the team celebrates a defensive stop, right.

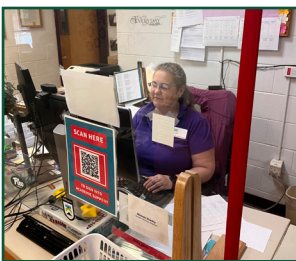
AVERY BOUCHARD



NEWS

Students express their dislike for online classes.

PAGE 3



NEWS

The face of Academic Support, Michele Stanley lives to help.

PAGE 4



SPORTS

Wrestling coach Scott Legacy drives the nationally ranked Spartans.

PAGE 8



Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, December 13, 2024

Christmas in Castleton

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

With its largest attendance since its launch in 2019, the yearly Christmas in Castleton event brought holiday cheer to the town last weekend.

Arts and crafts, a busy Christmas market, a blinding parade, and heartwarming holiday traditions were all part of the daylong celebration from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., which brought out visitors and residents to start the season in style.

Starting off the day, children and families could create their own photo ornaments to take home during the first arts and crafts session at the Castleton Free Library. Santa made an appearance to make sure everyone was staying on the nice list this year. The grinch however was lingering behind him trying to dim the Christmas cheer.

At the former Texaco lot was the Christmas Market. This showcased a wide range of local vendors exhibiting their handcrafted products and festive treats. They had everything from goat's milk fudge to stained glass ornaments, bourbon barrel maple syrup to hand knitted baby boots. The community members dodged in and out through booths, hands full with unusual presents and goodies.

Debra Lee Adams from Fat Toads Farm has been selling her goats milk soaps and fudge ever since the beginning.

"We've been here for five years, it's a family run business. I make all the fudge and the soap from our goats. Been here since the beginning so now people expect us to be here, it would be weird if we weren't here," Adams said.

Every year Adams also brings her infamous goats that are parked right outside Third Place. You could even feed them little pellets. Adams told a group of kids, "make sure to feed every goat in there so no one felt left out."

A food truck was posted behind the market selling their



MADDIE LINDGREN

Castleton was alive with Christmas spirit on Dec. 7.

famous fried dough, hot dogs, and even a fried dough hot dog, which is pretty self-explanatory. VTSU Castleton student Emma Ezzo got in line immediately when the smell of fried dough hit her nose.

"This is one good fried dough. It even comes with

a caramel sauce," Ezzo said sprinkling powdered sugar over the dough.

Among the vendors were Sweet Potato Accessories, run by local crafter Ashley Carter, who delighted shoppers with her cozy hand-knitted hats, scarves, and toys.

"The name of Sweet Potato Accessories came from my daughter. When she was little, we used to call her sweet potato, and it kind of just stuck," Carter shared. "This is our second year doing this and the turn out is way better than we expected, it's been a lot of fun."

With its selection of maple syrup and delicious treats, Genier Sugar House from Fair Haven, also attracted a consistent crowd. Before buyers even purchased their maple, they raved about the rich, smoky flavor of their bourbon maple syrup, which was given away

Why can't we get Castleton merch?



EM ELY AND GABBY BLANCHARD

Tim Keeler, top, checks out new VTSU merchandise at the Castleton book store, while wearing a green Castleton University sweatshirt. Helen Culpo's assortment of Castleton gear, bottom.

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

A student walks into an Effective Speaking class wearing a gray hoodie with a dark green decal stuck to the front that reads "Castleton Spartans" as the brave, capped Spartan is perched above the letters.

"Reese, where did you get that sweatshirt!" VTSU Castleton student Ines Robres Peireto shouted from across the room.

A similar exchange happened between two dads at a recent football game, when one asked the other if he could buy his Castleton Spartans hoodie, Castleton resident Rich Byrne recalled in a conversation with a VTSU Castleton professor.

Castleton Spartan gear is becoming more rare these days and students and parents are perplexed why.

So, why is Spartan team merchandise not allowed to be sold in the college store?

Who are the people preventing this?

Are they planning on removing all campus specific mascots and colors?

Microbiology professor and chair of natural sciences, Preston Garcia, has been asking these questions.

"I am saddened to see the varying of our history here. It's not a matter of not embracing

what's new, but not completely forgetting what the past was," Garcia said.

There is not a hint of Castleton green in sight when walking into the Castleton Campus bookstore these days.

Instead, salmon pink, neon teal, and three triangular shaped icons forming what is assumed to be mountains are plastered on the clothing that hangs from the many racks.

Geology professor Helen Mango also spoke about the impact the lack of Castleton Spartan merchandise has on the community. She explained that VTSU is not a place and after teaching at Castleton for more than 33 years, she knows that students want to belong to a place.

"The college community wants somewhere they feel comfortable and supported and seen and understood, where there are shared experiences and a sense of identity," Mango said.

She also gave examples from previous interactions with students who said they are going to Castleton and would like their apparel to say that because they don't identify with VTSU.

But the apparel that is sold in the only in-person bookstore out of all five VTSU campuses, located at the Castleton campus, is not up to store Manager

Penny Howard.

Howard stated that to the best of her knowledge, she believes that the athletic departments are the ones who still sell sports apparel. She shared how she reached out to the athletic department but has not gotten a response back.

Mango also stated that to her understanding, the only Spartan gear that is available right now is through the varsity athletics. Although, she is very fearful that this too will soon disappear.

Garcia talked about the change in the bookstore since the merger.

"The bookstore used to be vibrant," Garcia said. "I walk by now and it just looks empty and quiet, and being the only campus that has a bookstore, let's not lose that too."

Garcia expressed his concern over the hardship of going through the individual sports teams in order to receive merchandise to support certain sports. He shared how nice it is to be able to wear a hockey shirt to a hockey game, or a football hat to a football game. As an owner of gear supporting many different teams, he feels that it should be normalized for sports apparel to be easily accessible, especially to those who are parents and alumni.

VTSU Castleton students have these concerns too.

"It is kind of annoying because family members will want to get stuff to support, and it is hard for them. I know there is stuff on Amazon, but it is not really the best quality," said Annika Nelson, VTSU Castleton student and member of the women's hockey team.

When informed about the apparel being sold on Amazon, Howard's mouth literally dropped. After laughing with VTSU Castleton bookstore associate Andrew Martell about the many options for the "not so bad price," Howard took a serious tone when asking how Amazon can sell this brand if the college is not letting her?

"We went from some organization managing that bookstore to a different organization, and now to completely online books. Is just the turnover of those who oversee that space part of the problem? I don't know," Garcia said.

Previously owned by Follet, and recently turned over to Gear Shop, it is no secret that things have changed in the way merchandise is being represented.

Gear Shop could not be reached for comment despite an email and voice message seeking information.

See 'Merch' on page 6

Dining hall must do better

Huden Dining Hall. The name may ring a bell to some, but if not, this is the only dining hall on the VTSU Castleton campus.

For \$2,297 a semester, you can purchase your very own meal plan! The gold plan includes unlimited meal swipes in the dining hall for the semester, \$120 dollars toward the campus Fireside Cafe, long strands of hair in the tofu, and maggot-looking bugs in the lettuce.

If you're lucky, you may be able to find a few dozen ants crawling around the pans of food at the hot food bar.

Huden Dining Hall is one example at VTSU Castleton where students don't get what you pay for.

The dining hall is seemingly becoming worse, evidenced by complaints becoming more and more frequent in the Yik Yak social media platform.

Yik Yak, an anonymous posting app, is constantly flooded with complaints, photos and videos from Huden. Dining hall workers are seen rubbing their teeth with their gloves and scratching their heads to then go serve up a sandwich.

Staff members are seen picking up food from the hot food line with their gloved hands and popping it into their mouth.

Little larvae were seen found crawling on the broccoli at the salad bar.

And if you're vegetarian or vegan, you're guaranteed to develop some sort of vitamin deficiency due to the lack of proper and nutritious meals.

Some of the vegan and vegetarian meals include, but aren't limited to, vegan hot dogs, dried out and charred black bean patties with no op-

tion for buns or condiments, hot quinoa congealed with warmed pineapple, and "root vegetable mac and cheese," which entails mac and cheese mixed with carrots, radishes, cauliflower, and potatoes.

Some days in the vegetarian section there is not even a protein option.

The staff at Huden aren't entirely to blame. It is impossible to know what their bosses are telling them to do and what standards those in charge are holding the workers to. It is easy to become lackadaisical when you aren't being held to certain standards. Though the staff could be more sanitary, they are incredibly friendly and are always leaving students smiling.

Some staff blast music, some will hit you with a joke, or even take the time to learn your name.

But due to the amount of money VTSU students pay for the dining hall, they deserve better.

There needs to be higher standards for the quality and overall cleanliness at Huden. There needs to be vegetarian and vegan meals, not just random ingredients.

It's well known that college dining halls aren't going to have the same quality that a 5-star restaurant might, but for \$2,297 a semester and \$4,594 a year, the standards at Huden must be higher.

And even if the food doesn't improve, sanitary guidelines and proper cleaning must improve. No one wants to find a live bug in their root vegetable mac and cheese or have someone scratch their face and then serve you a sandwich.

- Emily Ely



JOE VYVIAL

Pearl's goodbye to *The Spartan*

I didn't always think the newspaper business was for me, which is extremely ironic considering my major and how long I've been involved in the Castleton Spartan student paper.

Now, especially considering my internship at the Rutland Herald, it feels like the logical next step.

I'm graduating this semester, and although I'll miss a lot about Castleton – theater, the greenhouse, giving tours at Admissions – the newspaper will inevitably be what defined my experience here.

I remember when I first became editor, and the sense of weight I felt.

Importance.

Like what I was doing mat-

tered and had to be taken seriously.

Those first couple months, I soaked it all in. I got up consistently earlier, made a Spartan themed playlist, hung out and watched movies in the Spartan office (some were class assigned so it's OK), and felt a particular esteem delivering the newspaper.

Now, it's up to Copy Editor Maddie Lindgren to pick it up next semester and add her own special flair and leadership style, which I know she'll do (no pressure, but like, a little pressure).

One thing I'll miss about the structure of the club, compared to other publications I may go on to work with, is how we were able to participate in

each step of the process. We were able to write, take photos, design the layout, and deliver it ourselves. You usually don't get to do all that for a newspaper.

I wonder who will design page 5 now (Arts and Entertainment). Somehow, I stuck with that for basically three and a half years...

I might cry.

I've been a part of many great memories over the years. Two trips to NYC for the College Media Association conference, one of which earned us the title of best newspaper in our division, three Christmases helping with our annual children's fundraiser, and at least 30 Sunday mornings devoted to designing the paper, pow-

ered by Dave's curtesy breakfast snacks.

And, of course, there were many articles that either challenged me or allowed me to explore personal interests. Art and Entertainment type articles typically resonated with me the most, but all of my articles following Honoree Fleming's death felt important to me as well and pushed me outside of my everyday coverage.

I'm incredibly grateful for our staff, past and present, and Dave for making the work fun and helping me find my ideal career. So long, Castleton Spartan!

- Pearl Bellomo
Managing Editor

Printed newspapers need to remain

In an age dominated by flashing screens and endless scrolls, the value of printed newspapers is frequently overlooked. However, physical newspapers, particularly on college campuses, provide a comfort that digital media struggle to match.

The physical structure of printed paper encourages interaction. Imagine student stopping to pick up The Castleton Spartan on their way to class. A phone notification cannot replace immediate engagement with a print copy.

The thin feel of paper, the crinkle in the flipping of pages, and the black ink spread across the pages cannot be duplicated by a thumb switching from screen to screen.

A study by Lauren Singer and Patricia Alexander of the University of Maryland states print materials generally result in deeper reading and higher information retention than digital versions. Print gives an outlet from the overstimulation of digital screens by providing a sensory experience that connects individuals with the text meaningfully.

Unfortunately, several campus publications have stopped printing due to mounting costs and falling circulation. Auburn University's Plainsman, Boston College's Heights, and the University of Maryland's Diamondback are just a few long-running newspapers that have discontinued print editions in recent years, some after over a century in operation.

These decisions are frequently made in response to financial constraints, but they come at the expense of a valued institution tradition. For example, the University of Nebraska's Daily Nebraskan decreased its print circulation in 2014, only to discover that its digital-first strategy lost readers interested in campus news.

At VTSU Castleton, continuing the print edition of The Spartan provides a sense of identity. The Spartan appears in almost every corner of Castleton and even several spots in Rutland.

A printed newspaper becomes an artifact, preserving the student body's voices, events and community. Print editions serve as lasting mementos for significant events such as athletic successes or considerable university advancements like the merger of Vermont schools.

Look at the University of Georgia's Red and Black, whose unique print issue celebrating a football victory sold out within hours, proving the importance of physical copies in recording milestones.

Additionally, print versions

Others may argue that going digital is environmentally friendly and aligned with current consumption habits. While correct, this argument ignores the environmental cost of digital interaction, which includes energy usage for servers and devices. Hybrid models that combine print and digital platforms can also increase the reach and impact of print editions.

Printed newspapers are more than just a thing of the past. They are a crucial outlet for connecting people, preserving history, and providing newer journalists with essential skills.

Maintaining a print edition is vital for colleges and media organizations because it protects journalistic history, not just nostalgia. Keep those presses going!

- Maddie Lindgren



DAVID BLOW

A Castleton Spartan student newspaper rack sits inside the Fine Arts Center with the latest edition.

teach essential journalistic abilities to students who develop layout design skills and editing skills. The transition to

"digital-only" risked losing these fundamental lessons in favor of the temporary urgency of online material.

Spartan gave me purpose

I am really sad to be leaving Castleton in a week. I have met so many wonderful people here and made so many memories.

It's sad leaving it all, and honestly scary going into the world trying to find a job that goes with my major.

I came to Castleton honestly not knowing what I was doing.

I had been at Community College of Vermont for three years, during COVID trying to finish my double major associate's degrees in accounting and marketing. I hadn't really considered going for my bachelor's.

I always wanted to major in writing, but because I was in early college and I had to stay at home, I went with CCV. And CCV unfortunately, does not have any majors with creative writing, so I put that out of my head, and it was honestly depressing.

I love writing, mainly creative writing, but if I can write it does not matter what it is, I will do it.

I decided randomly in July last year I was going to go to Castleton for my bachelor's degree in marketing. I was scared because for the prior three years I was either at work or doing school online and not leaving the house much, and

Castleton seemed daunting.

I am a huge introvert and am not the best at talking with people.

Then I saw the Spartan Newspaper at the Club Fair. I figured this is my chance to write!

I was so scared to inquire, because I am not good at talking to people. But they welcomed me with open arms and have changed my life.

The Spartan pushed me out of my comfort zone and got me talking to people. I am definitely still an introvert, but I am not scared to go talk to people anymore.

I actually strive to talk to and meet new people these days. It also got me out of my comfort zone with writing. I had never done journalistic writing before, only poems and small stories.

Journalism is a lot different, and I still have a lot to learn. But Dave (Professor Dave Blow) and the Spartan club members were all ready to help me learn, and keep me on the right track.

I was really worried about being a newbie to this type of writing, but they didn't care, they were willing to teach me and anyone else. Dave and Spartan editors gave me many opportunities that I would have not had if I didn't join the

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It's sad leaving it all, and honestly scary going into the world trying to find a job that goes with my major.

I came to Castleton honestly not knowing what I was doing.

I had been at Community College of Vermont for three years, during COVID trying to finish my double major associate's degrees in accounting and marketing. I hadn't really considered going for my bachelor's.

I always wanted to major in writing, but because I was in early college and I had to stay at home, I went with CCV. And CCV unfortunately, does not have any majors with creative writing, so I put that out of my head, and it was honestly depressing.

I love writing, mainly creative writing, but if I can write it does not matter what it is, I will do it.

I decided randomly in July last year I was going to go to Castleton for my bachelor's degree in marketing. I was scared because for the prior three years I was either at work or doing school online and not leaving the house much, and



COURTESY PHOTO

Rosa Kehoe, far left, poses in New York City with Spartan staffers who attended a conference there.

paper.

I got to write for the Rutland Herald through the Community News program, which has been a great resume builder.

It really has shown me that I need to stay writing, whether it be journalism or not. I learned through writing for the Spartan

that I can get a marketing job where I can do a lot of writing. Even though I am sad to be leaving, I am so glad I got the opportunity to join the paper for three semesters.

- Rosa Kehoe

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Castleton, Vermont

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STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

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Sustainable Christmas comes to Castleton



EMILY ELY
A student decorates reused corks to create DIY Christmas trees.

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

The Solarium inside the Campus Center came alive with the sounds of Christmas tunes, lively chatter, and the steady hum of sewing machines on Wednesday, Dec. 4.

The Campus Sustainability Team hosted a DIY card, wreath, and gift-making event aimed at promoting a “green” holiday. The event encouraged sustainability by reusing materials and repurposing items that would otherwise be discarded.

This year, the team introduced a Repair Café with the slogan, “Mend, Don’t Toss.” Students brought in worn clothing, and volunteers with sewing skills were on hand to help repair it.

Team member and science professor Andy Vermilyea was spotted next to a wheelbarrow full of brambles, skillfully shaping them into circles so they could make them into

wreaths.

“Half of them (the grape vines) are from my house, the other half are from campus from cleaning out some places that were overgrown and going crazy,” said Vermilyea.

Team member Nik Buonocore-Villalobos was busy leading a crafting table, where students worked with recycled corks and other materials.

“I had this huge box of corks at home, so I was thinking about crafts we could do with those,” she said, as she began working on her cork Christmas tree.

“I am obsessed with sustainability, and I feel like we have so much in production already that if we really just gave it a chance to look around and use the things that we already have. Like, nothing on this table was purchased. The wire, the paints, the brushes, the corks, the glue, every aspect of this craft is completely reused. And I love that, it makes me happy inside,” Buonocore-Villalobos

added, smiling.

The event also showcased materials sourced from the local community. Caitlin Gates, communications coordinator came from a makerspace organization in Rutland called The MINT to promote sustainability. “We’re using recycled calendars to make garlands. Calendars are just so pretty and they’ve been coming out really well,” she said, while motioning to an example of the garland she had created.

VTSU Student Government Association member Zack Durr stopped by to show support.

“In SGA, we try to attend as many events as we can to support what students and faculty are doing on campus,” Durr said. “It’s cool to use sustainable practices and have fun while making holiday crafts.”

Durr had hoped to make a craft for his girlfriend but wasn’t sure what it would turn out to be.

The “Repair Café” aspect of the event drew many students eager to have their clothes repaired instead of throwing them away.

“If somebody has something that needs to be mended, we can help with that,” Vermilyea said.

The event offered more than just a chance to make crafts. It was an opportunity to learn about sustainable living.

“We thought we’d start with clothing because students have clothing,” said Greteina Johnson, who was one of the seamstresses assisting with the Repair Café.

VTSU student Leah Smitt reflected on her ideas about sustainability especially around the holidays.

“When you give people personal and homemade gifts, they’ll remember it more than something cheap you got off Amazon,” she said.

See ‘Sustainability’ on

Brit Green: from doubt to doctorate

By Isabell Lanfear
Spartan Contributor

VTSU Castleton McNair Scholars Director Brittney “Britt” Green was on her couch after making dinner as Lola, her 13-year-old boxer Pitbull mix, creaked up onto the couch next to her.

Her husband, Brandon Green, would sit next to Lola on the couch, watching shows with her, or applying for teaching jobs in his office while Green played games on her phone.

That’s often how Green unwinds after her day at the office, sitting on the couch with her husband and dog watching “Gossip Girls” for the 101st time.

However, Dr. Brittney Green was once just Brittney Green, who was once just Brittney Murphy, who was once just a child.

When Green was 2, she choked on a McDonald’s hamburger, not only scaring everyone around her, but also scaring herself, as she then refused to eat for the entire month before Thanksgiving. Thankfully, after much trial and error, the toddler decided that eating wasn’t scary anymore and began eating again just in time for the heavy-eating holiday.

Green was the third child of four. Her two older siblings, Tommy and Meredith were 13 and 12 years older than her. When she and her younger brother by three years, Brandon who Green called “Bubba,” were children, they attended a summer camp at the Herald Rec Center in Florida.

There was an arcade there and the two wanted to play. However, coming from a low-income family, they knew that their parents wouldn’t give them any cash. Needing coins for the arcade and knowing their dad had coins in a jar in the closet, the two hatched a plan to get some of the coins from the jar so that they could play at the arcade.

The heist was a success and the two spent the coins at the arcade and won some cute little animal figures. However, after their heist was unearthed, they learned that the coins had been real silver coins, worth hundreds of dollars. She still feels a little bad about it today but keeps the prizes in her office as a memento.

“We were always cooking up schemes,” said Green, smiling when recalling the memory.

After Hurricane Charlie decimated their Florida town, the Murphy family moved around a bunch throughout the then Brittney Murphy’s, middle school and high school career. It wasn’t all bad for her however, as she got to have two sets of best friends, and she noted that she felt like moving around didn’t really affect her that much.

—

While enrolled at the University of Central Florida to study humanities, Green worked full-time for a majority of her undergraduate career. For her freshman year, she worked as a model on the weekends. Her second and third years, she worked in a restaurant, which grew a secret passion for the restaurant industry.

“You might find one day that I’ve just up and left and that’s because I have some restaurant I want to work at,” Green joked.

Work and school became separate worlds for Green, with work often taking precedence over academics.

“I was working so much that I wrote down the exam times wrong,” Green said.

Her G.P.A started to tank, and everything was beginning to become very stressful. It wasn’t until Green learned about and joined the McNair Scholars program that she was forced to quit her job because her McNair director told her to.

“You can’t do nearly 40 hours in a restaurant and still

do good in school,” Green said. So, after quitting her job to focus on school, the director offered Green a position in the office at \$10 an hour, which was a livable wage for her at the time as she had also applied for scholarships.

“That’s really when college felt like it started for me because it felt like I had a purpose,” she said.

Before that, Green had just been going through college like she thought she was supposed to do, taking courses that interested her.

“I was flailing all over the place. I certainly was having fun, but I don’t know if I was really doing well in college or going in that direction,” she said.

She didn’t know what graduate school was until she joined the McNair Scholars program, learning skills and knowledge that she would use in life. She also eventually found what her two majors and minor would be; World Religions and Cultural Studies with a minor in Mass Communications.

She did research, going away for two research summers, one in Irvine, California and the other in Croatia. These experiences prepared her for her master’s degree, which she pursued at Dartmouth College.

From living in Florida her whole life to moving to the northeast for grad school, Dartmouth was the start of her graduate school journey.

“The look of it, the feel of it was just so different,” she said. “The folks that go to a school like Dartmouth are generally, very, very wealthy.”

She felt that the students really wanted to be there. So, she felt like she really fit in academically. “McNair prepared me really well for graduate school,” she said, adding that while there was a short period of time where she didn’t fit in culturally or socially when she first got there.

See ‘Green’ on Pg. 6



COURTESY OF BRIT GREEN
Brit Green and surrounded by family after graduating from UCLA.



COURTESY OF BRIT GREEN
Brit Green, far left, poses with members of the McNair Scholars program.

Students are saying NO to online classes

By Brandon Burmeister
Castleton Spartan

For students both current and former, two words bring back memories of glitchy connections, comfy work clothes, and social isolation.

Zoom classes.

After all, the platform was introduced during a tidal shift in education, brought on by the world-shattering lockdown from the Covid-19 pandemic. It was an incredibly useful tool, allowing students to still continue their education, even while being stuck at home.

Eventually, the student body was able to come back to the classroom and, on May 5, 2023, the World Health Organization officially declared the end of Covid-19 pandemic.

This, however, hasn’t stopped Zoom classes from being integrated into our education system to the point where it has now become commonplace.

But what are the views of students regarding online classes now that the dust has finally settled?

“I hate them with a burning passion. It’s just the way I learn, I have to be in a classroom with the teacher,” said Kylie Harrington reflecting back on her experience as she grips tightly the railing next to her.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BRANDON BURMEISTER

Harrington is a freshman in college and experienced the full brunt of Zoom classes during the pandemic as a high school freshman.

“I’m a very social person, and if I don’t understand what’s happening, I need to be able to either ask someone next to me or go up to the teacher and they can show me what I did wrong and what I’m missing. I’m a hands-on learner. I’ve always been that way,” she said.

She had terrible grades during the pandemic as a result, something she blames entirely on the learning environment shift during the pandemic.

“I had amazing grades until

COVID and I had amazing grades after COVID so I wasn’t the problem,” she said.

Harrington’s frustrations are echoed by other students who struggled to adapt to online learning.

“You’re not really motivated if it doesn’t seem genuine and real. It’s just a screen,” said Violet Tetreault, a sophomore Graphic Design major with a minor in marketing. “I feel like it kind of lacks that human interaction that really drives people forward to do stuff.”

This attitude is shared by professors as well, as they are dealing with the impersonal

side of Zoom classes.

Heidi Welch, the program coordinator for music education, is tired of online classes.

“Zoom is the biggest challenge for me. As a teacher of almost 30 years, the biggest challenge for Zoom was not seeing faces and really trying to encourage people to turn their cameras on so I can see what you look like. And I’d always get ‘my cameras broken.’ Well, how do I know that?” she said.

Not all opinions of online classes are completely negative, though.

Josef Vyvial, a sophomore Graphic Design major from the Czech Republic, sees the benefits of online classes.

“I think it’s pretty good to have options for online classes. Yeah, I prefer in-person, but I took this class that was pretty easy to me and I could have done all of it from back home. So, it was convenient for me to take it online,” he said.

Some students and professors say online classes offer accessibility to people who have responsibilities that require them to be elsewhere.

“I think having Zoom classes allows students from our other campuses to take courses that may only be offered in a program on a par-

ticular campus. For instance, the social work program is cited here at Castleton,” said Michael Reeves, the director of the social work program at the Castleton campus.

Vyvial and Reeves both, however, said they do prefer in-person classes. Reeves believes having in-person upper-level social work courses is necessary for students looking to get into the field as it allows for them to experience the work hands-on.

But Vermont State University has begun to integrate more and more online classes into the curriculum, some programs being consolidated completely to online. When questioned about the reason for this, administration has repeatedly said that students would prefer to have their classes online. This has raised alarm bells in both students and faculty as they fear a completely online college is on the horizon.

It also isn’t an opinion shared by other schools in the area. While higher education institutions like Vermont State University embraces Zoom classes, Rutland public schools have taken a more cautious approach.

“Public schools really don’t offer remote or Zoom options,” said Bianca McKeen,

the assistant superintendent for the Rutland City Public Schools. “The agency of Education made an exception to allow those types of things when we were in shutdown. And then as we came out of shutdown, they told schools they could not give that as an option anymore.”

She stated a variety of reasons why this was the case, from student check-in to making sure they were actually attending.

“It’s difficult for students to have the same kind of connections in remote classes as in-person classes. You feel a different way when you’re in a room with people and you can fully see the mannerisms of the group and the physical cues, as opposed to being online, you only get a small portion of that,” she said.

And this is shared by the students here. From the 31 students questioned in an informal poll, all from different areas of studies, none said they preferred online classes.

Tetreault rushed to comment before the interview was over, interrupting the question she was being asked as she felt so strongly about this topic.

“Zoom classes take away from what an actual campus and going to college should be, which is in-person,” she said.

Maddie on the street

By Madeleine Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



Question:
What are you asking for for Christmas and why?



Genevieve Pitts Junior
“I need a new hair straightener. I don’t even have one right now. I am just always using my roomates.”



Trey LaVigne Senior
“I really want a choo-choo train this year. I think they’re cool and I used to get them when I was younger.”



Devon Riggio Junior
“I really want some more Squishmellows. They are my favorite. Even though I have so many, I need more!”



Jess Heinrichs Senior
“All I want is gift cards and clothes. That’s all I want every year.”



Alexis Rodgers Junior
“I really want a weiner dog. I dont know if I’ll get one, but I really want one, a fluffy one. They’re so cute.”

Michele Stanley: Strengthening Student Success

Madelyn Nonni
Castleton Spartan

It’s no secret that VTSU-Castleton has its fair share of unwavering support for students from its dedicated faculty and staff. Within Academic Support, workers are incredibly aware of that kind of dedication.

Upon entering Academic Support, students are met with the bright and upbeat personality that is Michele Stanley, staff assistant in the department.

Her desk is placed perfectly at the entrance and after four years as a staff member, Stanley knows its services like the back of her hand. She is efficiently able to understand a student’s needs and determine which service would be best suited, whether it be an individual peer tutor, a follow-up with other staff, or drop-in tutoring.

Referring to herself as the “gatekeeper,” Stanley takes pride in greeting and navigating those when walking in and ensuring they are comfortable in the space.

“She gets to know each and every one of the students that comes into Academic Support, which all students enjoy. It makes them feel welcomed and comfortable and they always choose to go to Michele with any problems or questions they have,” said Learning Center Assistant and VTSU senior Alissa Benson.

“I love working with people... I love to interact with people,” Stanley said.

Before her current influential role in Castleton’s Academic Support, Stanley was driven by her education, previous employment and personal pursuits.

Stanley is a proud first-generation college student who grew up in a single-parent household. To support her education, she spent her summer breaks, weekends and holidays working as a nanny.

After putting herself through school, Stanley graduated from Adirondack Community College in Queensbury, New York with a degree in Hotel Management. Following graduation, Stanley spent six years working as a Hotel Manager in Massachusetts.

By the time she was 28, Stanley had broken through the glass ceiling and landed in top management with 250 employees working for her. Her journey to this position was not without its challenges though and she soured in a male-dominated industry.

Stanley also worked as a resident manager at Killington before putting the hotel lifestyle in the rearview mirror and making the transition into a daytime job.

“I did not want that 80-hour week, seven days a week, holidays, weekends. So, I decided to get a weekday job. And where do you find a weekday job? In academia,” said Stanley.

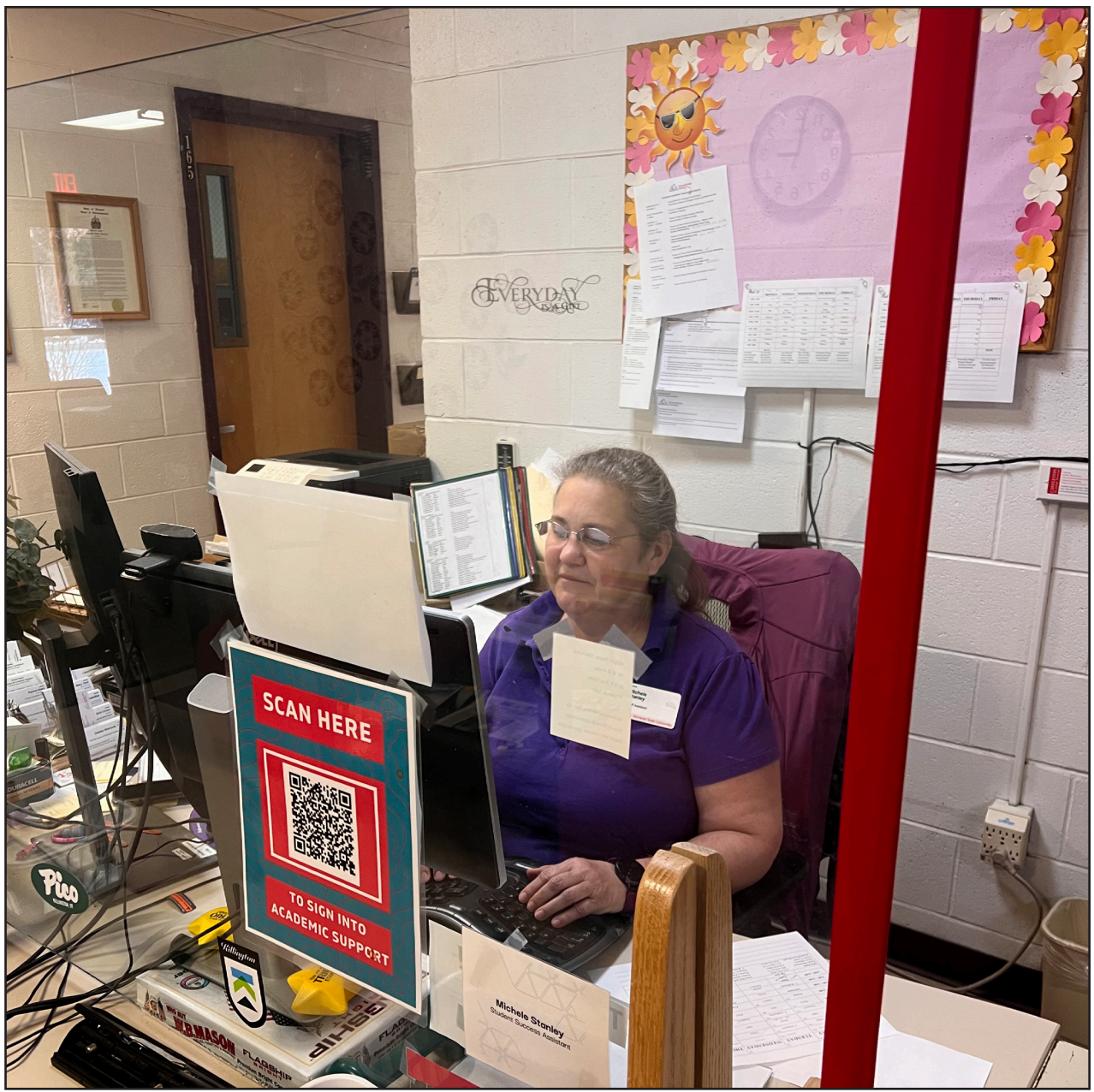
While looking for a daytime job, Stanley’s eye was caught after seeing a position in Castleton’s Admissions Office.

Determined to further her education, Stanley began her position and attentively pecked away the requirements to obtain a minor at Castleton in marketing. She took classes during her lunch breaks and took evening classes after an entire day’s work while maintaining her full-time job.

Stanley completed her requirements and obtained the minor in 2008.

She emphasizes the significance of a college education for both herself and the students within the Castleton community.

“I truly do believe in higher



Madeilyn Nonni
Michele Stanley works at her desk and is the first to be seen when you first enter the doors of Academic Support. Below, Stanley poses after competing in the Bicycling Fall Classic after two knee surgeries.

education... I believe that we’ve got to get these students a higher education. It’s just valuable,” she said.

Her commitment to supporting Castleton students stretches wide, as Stanley has become a vital contact for many students looking for guidance.

“There have been many times where I have had questions about certain topics and didn’t know where to go. I’ll ask Michelle and she’ll make a few phone calls and have the answer for me. I’ve seen her do this for many other students,” said Learning Center Assistant and VTSU junior, Drew Conant.

Her reputation as a valuable resource isn’t reserved only for students. Co-workers in the department also notice her hands-on approach and support for everyone.

“She takes time to get to know them as individuals. I’ve often described her as the cool aunt. She’s just a wonderful presence in our department,” said Doe Dahm, Writing and Humanities development coordinator in Academic Support.

She spreads the message of how positively impacted students’ post-grad lives can be when they receive higher education, including gaining professional life experience, instead of the endless grind of an over-consuming job. She stresses the importance of students entering into a job they want to do and something they can see themselves doing.

After 18 years in Admissions, Stanley made the switch to Academic Support, where she has remained in her current position for the past four years.

As staff assistant in the department, it could be argued that Stanley is one of its most important figureheads.

“We have many students coming in and they need assistance. It’s trying to determine what they really do need, and navigating them to the correct service,” she said. “There’s lots of options for them.”



Stanley’s dedication to finding the correct resource for her students is clear, as she’s known for going the extra mile at whatever cost.

“She takes every challenge seriously and will run through all of the resources and people that she knows to try to find a solution. I think her most important concern is helping students, and she won’t quit in helping them,” said Rachel Mark, director of Academic Support on Castleton’s Campus.

“She is my go-to person for any problems or questions I have whether it is school related or life related,” Benson said, illustrating Marks’ comment.

Academic Support serves around 230 students who return for six or more visits throughout the academic year.

“That’s really good and really helpful because then we can hopefully get them on a good track,” Stanley said.

“She supports not only her students, but also other faculty

in Academic Support. Michele is an amazing resource and has been a lifeline for me since I stepped on to campus the first day freshman year,” said Learning Center Assistant and VTSU junior Emma Patria.

But she’s not all just about work. Now at the age of 60, Stanley is determined to step away from the desk and keep herself physically active during her free time and during the weekends.

She can often be found in hiking locations like Billings Farm’s Carriage Trails in Woodstock or Mt. Philo in Vergennes.

“I also ride bicycles. It’s not unlike me to ride 22 miles. I like the ride into West Rutland and back, that’s 24-miles round trip. I ride now down into Hampton, into Whitehall, and come back out,” she said.

After a previous stroke, and a bilateral knee replacement five years ago, Stanley was determined to remain active and soon discovered biking, quickly evolving into her

favorite hobby.

“I will happily approve of her leaving early on a beautiful day so she can take a bike ride because I know she’s always the first person here in the morning,” Mark said.

During her off time, Stanley can also be found traveling the East Coast with her husband, taking a week off twice a year to spend some well-deserved vacation time. Oftentimes she’s visiting family in South Carolina, or spending time in Florida during Vermont’s harsh Februaries. This year, Stanley has her trip planned to St. Augustine.

While visiting Florida, Stanley enjoys participating in group-organized bike rides on main roads escorted by police. She has participated in the Gran Fondo Florida Ride, out of Delray Beach with Louis Garneau, the cycle-wear manufacturer, and their group out of Canada.

See “Michele” on page 6

Are students idling their cars too long?

Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

VTSU Castleton Liaison Librarian Charlotte Gerstein has been noticing that many students are idling their vehicles too long on campus, adding unnecessary pollution into the air

She said although the university’s utility vehicles also contribute to idling, she’s noticed more and more students letting their cars run unnecessarily. She said that people need reminding of environmental impacts and that idling is not permitted.

“I’m concerned about pollution,” she said. “I don’t like unnecessary pollution.”

She claimed that idling happens regardless of the weather. “When the temperature is not cold, people are still sitting there with their engines on,” she reported. “It’s not neces-

sary.”

Gerstein noted that “maybe some more signage” could help spread more awareness about turning off engines when the vehicle is not in use.

Gerstein also referred to the Vermont state law regarding idling via email which can be viewed at legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/23/013/01110.

In addition, she also forwarded sources from the Agency of Natural Resources and their “Be Idle Free” document that can be viewed online at dec.vermont.gov/air-quality/mobile-sources/be-idle-free.

Andrew Vermilyea, professor and chair of Environmental Science Program, also referred to the state law.

“It’s at least five years old,” he claimed.

He said that although he has not noticed it too much on campus, he does agree with the

negative impacts of it.

“There are some safety issues,” he said.

He also referred to the Castleton campus policy that had been implemented regarding idling.

“I’m part of the campus sustainability team...” he reported. “We wrote a campus policy for idling a number of years ago.”

He said the policy was written in 2014 “on the heels of state law.”

“It’s never been officially enforced,” he said, although he said it was approved by Castleton campus.

He added that the school policy is stricter than the state policy, setting the maximum number of minutes of idling at three, whereas the state policy is five minutes.

He also pointed out that, according to Oak Ridge National Laboratory, idling excessively

leads to carbon buildup and engine wear and tear, aside from the environmental impacts.

Vermilyea talked about the culprit of much of the idling.

“A lot of the idling actually comes from drop offs...loading and unloading vehicles,” he claimed.

Associate Professor of Physics Timothy Thibodeau, who stated he and Gerstein are also on the sustainability team, said that he has not witnessed a lot of student idling first-hand, adding that he has actually witnessed the opposite.

“I see lots of people being respectful and responsible,” he said.

In regards to his experience being different from Gerstein’s, he pointed out one reason that might be the case.

“I wonder, too, if it depends on what parking lot you’re in?” he said, questioningly.

He mentioned that when

VTSU was Castleton University, there was more language regarding sustainability, whereas that seems to be missing in VTSU’s mission statement.

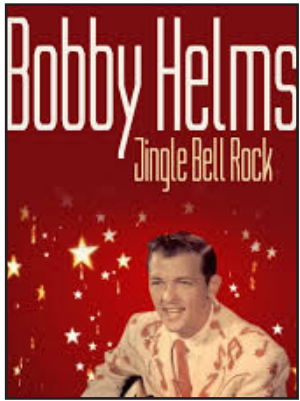
He pointed out that, historically, older cars needed to warm up, but that is not the case with newer cars.

“It’s actually better to just get going,” he said.

He added that electric vehicles are only environmentally efficient if the electricity is not derived from fossil fuels. However, he claims that Vermont is “in pretty good shape” as far as electric energy is concerned.

Thibodeau questioned why some students seem to be adhering to the no-idling rules.

“Is it the policy that causes people to do the right thing?” he asked, adding that he hopes it is education and knowledge of environmental sustainability that causes this respectful behavior, rather than the policy.



Students’ Christmas tune faves

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

The bells are ringing, the children are singing. Allegedly everything is merry and bright. It’s that time of year! Christmas music can be heard just about anywhere, at any time. The SiriusXM radio has all the Jackson 5 Christmas covers. Your local mall will surely be blasting Mariah Carey’s “All I Want for Christmas Is You” and “Sia’s Snowman” throughout the department stores as families line up to meet Santa Claus.

Tree lightings in town parks will have people singing everybody’s favorite carols.

The special time of year calls for a special kind of soundtrack.

And people are very specific on which songs they consider must have classics and Christmas songs that are a little too cringe.

For VTSU Castleton student Madelyn Nonni, her go-to Christmas song is a cover by a modern artist.

“Hot take, but my favorite is definitely “Mistletoe” by Justin Bieber.”

A popular genre of Christmas music are covers of classic carols done by pop artists. Something special occurs within one’s soul when their favorite artist is singing a classic Christmas song during their favorite time of year.

Celebrities who have done this include Ariana Grande with “Santa Tell Me,” Demi Lovato’s “Wonderful Christmastime,” and Taylor Swift’s “Santa Baby.”

Nonni’s cringiest Christmas song is “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas.”

“I cannot stand it,” Nonni said.

However, Nonni’s trash is student Hunter Day’s treasure, so to speak.

“My favorite Christmas song is “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas” because it’s just so silly and feels almost unrelated to Christmas,” Day said.

Remember the non-stop mall Christmas music?

Day is not about it.

“I worked in retail for a lot of my life so I cannot stand most like Mariah Carey Christmas songs cause they’re just so overplayed,” Day said.

“But ‘Baby It’s Cold Outside’ is just downright creepy and freaks me out,” Day continued.

That song consists of a male voice trying to convince the female voice to stay when she very clearly is trying to leave.

And student Sya Barnes had a similar take regarding “Baby It’s Cold Outside.

“Like ‘I can’t stay,’ and ‘it’s cold outside.’ Yeah, because it’s fucking snowing. Let me go. Just let me leave. I just want to leave. I don’t like it.”

She has a specific hatred towards the “Glee” version of this song.

“When Kurt and Blaine did it. I hate that version. It’s just weird. They’re wearing blazers, dancing around some chairs. Let me go. It’s just awkward,” said Barnes.

Thomas Harris’ favorite Christmas song is the classic “Jingle Bell Rock.”

“It always hits and is catchy and it has good Christmas spirit,” he said.

Students surely have their favorites and least favorites of Christmas music. Maybe your favorite time of the holidays is wandering through JCPenney, doing some Christmas shopping with Frank Sinatra’s “Let It Snow” playing in the background or strolling through a lit up park with “Jingle Bells” by James Pierpont.

Whichever it may be, the Castleton Spartan newspaper wishes you a happy listening and a happy holiday.

Put your phones down, enjoy the show

By Isabelle Lanfear
Spartan Contributor

You’re at a concert for your favorite singer. You’re standing in the pit, sweaty, standing arm to arm with the person next to you.

Suddenly, the singer skips over near where you are standing, you look up at them. You can see the details of their outfit, what expression they’re making.

You smile, happy to be able to be this close to the performer when all of the sudden, a phone shoots up in front of your face, blocking your view.

Now, you can only see the performer from the tiny screen on the phone.

Not only is this annoying for you, but the people on stage also have to deal with that every single night they perform.

There have been many artists who have claimed they don’t enjoy seeing phones during their concerts. Some have outright banned them during their performances. Prince is an example of this, as in 2013, he advertised “purple rules,” which effectively banned cell phones and other forms of visual capture.

Bob Dylan is another artist who has banned photos during his shows. Dylan is known to keep his policy of no photos

very strict, and anyone found taking pictures is removed.

There could be a number of reasons why phones aren’t allowed at a concert, but a lot of the time, it’s because the artists prefer not to have phones pointed at their faces. Other times it could distract the band members. Or sometimes the band might be recording a movie.

Lead singer of Ghost, Tobias Forge, said in an interview after his movie released that, “They were the best shows I’ve ever done with Ghost, just because I didn’t have to see those f-ing mobile phones.”

Ghost goes on tour again in 2025— this time with a phone ban.

Are fans missing out when they use their phones during a concert?

Yes, they are.

Being on your phone while at a concert, can distract you from the performance. It’s understandable, wanting a picture or a video of your favorite artist to immortalize the moment. To have something to look back on fondly. However, it not only distracts from the experience, as you now have to unlock your phone, open the camera, and get the settings just right so that the exposure isn’t too high. Those moments take away from the performance you are watching.

Not only that, but the

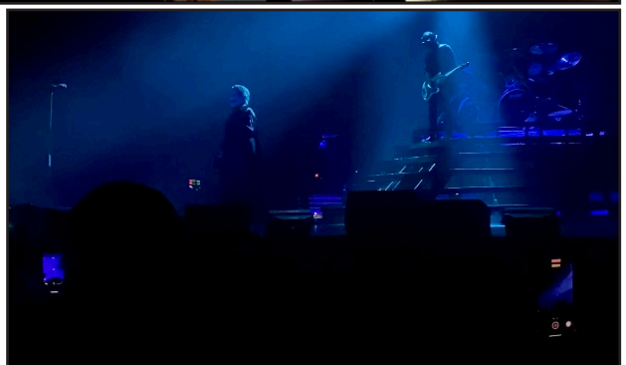


performers on stage would rather see you engaging with them than through a screen.

The concerts that implement this no phone policy give out Yonder pouches, which hold your phone during the performance. You can take your phone out of the pouch in designated areas, or of course if there is an emergency.

The point of a no phone concert can be to get you to engage more. To experience the concert without being on your mobile device, which can not only distract you, but also the people around you and the band members.

While some artists might encourage recording them and taking photos, others might not



ISABELL LANFEAR
Audience members use their phones during a “Ghost” concert.

and feel that it takes away from the experience. Recording a concert through a screen feels ingenuine.

Put down your phone and

just feel the music with your body and soul and sing your heart out for a night to remember.

‘Wicked’ spurs hype and drama

By Pearl Bellomo
Castleton Spartan

The musical “Wicked,” starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo as witches Glinda and Elphaba, has swarmed my feed the past two months.

From mass brand collaborations, speculation about the main actress’s emotional and physical health, internet hype, and fan confrontation – it felt nearly impossible to not go and see it.

So, naturally my friend Violet and I hit the nearest theater as soon as Thanksgiving break began, with her dressed in green and me in pink.

Saving the internet drama for later, I thought it was a very captivating movie that held my attention for nearly its entirety – which is saying something for two-and-a-half-hour movie that’s only part one.

I will admit that I had never seen the original “Wicked” on Broadway, and I only watched the original “The Wizard of Oz” the night before because I wanted some sort of baseline knowledge. I realize now that it may not have even been necessary, due to the simple relationship of “Wicked” as its prequel.

The music, choreography, set and costumes were all beautifully executed. I was shocked to find out that most of the sets were not CGI, but actually real! The 9 million tulips planted on the outskirts of Munchkinland and the 16-ton train that transports Glinda and Elphaba to Emerald City were real.

That begins to explain its \$150 million dollar budget.

There was speculation about if Grande was fit to play Glinda. I undoubtedly thought she was. I’m not really an “Arianator,” but I’ve kept up with her acting and music since her role in “Victorious,” and she evidently rebranded herself for this production. This drove the



Pearl Bellomo and Violet Tetreault pose outside the Marquis Theater in Middlebury, left, and a “Wicked” poster, right.

success of the film and doubts accusations of her simply being a “popularity hire.”

Erivo, though not an A-list celebrity, was equally as magnificent. In fact, one of my favorite songs cinematically was “The Wizard and I” because of her delivery and brilliant shots.

Now, moving on to the controversies—beginning with speculation about Grande and Erivo’s physical and emotional health.

Obviously, I can’t know the state of either of their health right now. Even though they seem to have lost weight since they started filming in 2022, there is no other evidence for them having eating disorders or enduring abuse on set, and Grande herself claimed to actually be healthier than she was several years ago.

Also, there are so many other factors that influence

how a person looks. Cosmetic surgery, self-tanner, hair, makeup, camera lenses, photo lighting and editing, just to name a few. Any of these elements can make the same person look drastically different on the same day.

In terms of emotional health, I agree that most of the press interviews have been highly emotional, with tears triggered at many simple questions and statements. I don’t see anything wrong with poking a little fun at this, even they do. But I’m not alarmed by it enough to speculate that “something bad must’ve happened on set,” like some are.

Now onto fan drama. Many have probably heard of Erivo’s backlash at a fan edit of the “Wicked” poster to more closely resemble the 2003 original. The revised poster made several edits—such as

adjusting Grande’s hand and changing Erivo’s lipstick color, but what struck Erivo was her eyes being covered by the brim of her witch’s hat, rather than her looking down the barrel of the camera.

Erivo called out thea fan on her Instagram, saying, “I am a real-life human being, who chose to look right down the barrel of the camera to you, the viewer, because without words we communicate with our eyes...to edit my face and hide my eyes is to erase me. And that is deeply hurtful.”

Two weeks later, she reflected on her reaction, describing it as a “human moment of wanting to protect little Elphaba” and “I probably should have called my friends.”

Nonetheless, I thought it was a massive overreaction that shamed an innocent fan and was terrible PR. The



PEARL BELLOMO, WICKED

fan, by the account name @wickedmexicofans, initially took the poster down but later reposted it, justifying their decision.

“While I deleted initially as I felt it was the right thing to do, fan posters have been around for as long as movies have existed. I never meant to cause any harm, and the poster is just a homage to the original Broadway poster, just like the movie’s recreation is,” they posted on X.

Regardless of the drama, I thought it was a great film, and moreover it had really impressive marketing. Though their hundreds of brand collaborations may have been a bit much, their internet hype made me, and millions of others excited in a way that really hasn’t happened since last year’s “Barbie” and “Oppenheimer.”

Newest show worth bingeing: ‘The Madness’

By Julian Chiemingo-Rivera
Spartan Contributor

What’s On Netflix?
Do you ever get bored of watching the same old movies and shows? This blog is here to give insight into refreshing new Netflix shows.

“The Madness”
This week on the watch list we have the newest Netflix thriller, “The Madness.”

In the first episode, Muncie Daniels wakes up in the middle of the Pocono forest, where he makes his way to find help. He stumbles through the forest to then find a nearby diner, where he encounters two police officers. We see a brief flash of what happened to Muncie as he is battling in the woods.

But what truly happened is soon to be discovered.

Muncie is a writer and appears as a guest host on CNN. He has lots of powerful opinions that are viewed by mil-

lions across the world.

He had planned a quiet escape from reality in the Pocono Mountains to focus on writing a book, but he stumbles upon his temporary neighbor, Mark, who recognizes him and offers him help if he needs it.

Muncie puts this gesture to use the next day when his power goes out at his house. This led to him discovering his neighbor was chopped into pieces in his shed.

Two masked men come around the corner and chase down Muncie after he discovers the body. Muncie is lucky to escape and take down one of the men with a pen to the neck.

This is where we find ourselves at the beginning of the episode.

Muncie leads the police to the scene, where he finds that the body has been cleaned up and there are no signs of masked men.

As a result, the police believe Muncie is insane and made this whole thing up. However, they find his neigh-

bor’s watch right outside the shed, and Muncie’s car tires are slashed.

The police then switch their narrative and think of Muncie as a possible suspect in this situation.

They did not arrest him but had him on their radar as a suspicious person. This is when things spiral for Muncie in this series. He finds a tracker located on the back of his car.

Who’s tracking him, and who is this Mark guy??

Muncie did some digging and found Mark’s former wife, who did not reveal who he truly was. This is when FBI agent Franco Quinones approaches Muncie, saying that this case might line up with a case he is working on. Telling more information about the situation, Muncie finds out that Mark Strong was a part of a white supremacist group called Forge.

With Muncie being well known, it is common knowledge that he has ties with BLM. This links to a possible hatred that Muncie may have



Muncie Daniels from “The Madness.”

for Mark. This now looks very suspicious.

Muncie finds himself being approached by a few men in the hospital, where they ask him about Brother14. This must be Mark’s Forge members questioning and threatening Muncie and his family.

He rushes out of the hospital to ensure his family is safe. This is when Muncie notices that Mark’s watch is inside his car, along with blood splatter on the outside.

My Thoughts

A phenomenal show so far. This show caught my attention very quickly and had me locked in on the action. For those of you who love thriller crime shows, this is for you. This show had me watching the first three episodes in a row. This will be watched within the next week, as I’m already almost halfway done with the season in one sitting.

Merch:

Howard said she sympathizes with both sides of providing and not providing Castleton merchandise. She stated how if it were up to her, she would have a little bit of both as she thinks it would sell. That said, it seems people don't fully understand that those who work in the bookstore are not the ones who get to decide the Sparty apparel fate.

When students come into the bookstore and get told that there is no Spartan or Castleton merchandise available, they just turn around and walk out.

"They are paying me just to sit here," Martell said.

Even though the newer look of VTSU merchandise is not what most Castleton community members apparently want to see, Martell said, "it is now our brand, and it is not going to change, so might as well embrace it."

Some students say they don't like the merger, nor do they really acknowledge it.

"I think most people still think of it as Castleton, and very few students accept that it is now VTSU, so it is a bummer that we can't get Castleton things, especially when wanting to support our sports teams," said Helen Culp, VTSU Castleton student and daughter of the head basketball coach.

Martell said it's a tough issue because he understands both the desire to still have Castleton green merchandise and the desire to focus on the togetherness aspect of the VTSU merger.

"When it comes to the complete switch of the brand, I think they are damned if they do and damned if they don't," Martell concluded.

Michele:

"Louis Garneau... has a great cohort of people down there, and we used to ride with all the Canadians down there. You meet amazing, wonderful people, no matter where you travel, but when you're bicycling, people just seem to be really friendly," said Stanley.

Stanley recalls when she went to Colorado in 2011, she was able to meet many riders from the Tour de France, like Cadel Evans, an Australian Cyclist who won the Tour that year.

"They're in a parking lot with all their buses and everything you see on TV. You can walk right up to them. We talked to Levi Leipheimer's doctor about what kind of foods they feed him, and the nutrition supplements they give him. It was just so interesting," she said.

Stanley attributes her activities away from the desk, to allowing her to put her all into her job on campus.

"I'm passionate about being healthy, I'm passionate about my travel. Making time for your students, but also yourself outside of work, having a life away from the desk. You have to, it's a high-energy job," said Stanley.

Balancing the demands of her role and maintaining her personal well-being is a notable factor that Stanley emphasizes in her life, allowing her to be more readily available to help students.

"I think that students appreciate Michele because she is almost always available and she always has the answers," said

A look at VTSU administrative salaries

Above is a portion of a chart listing administrative salaries in the chancellor's office, designed by science professor Helen Mango. In an email, VTSU Chancellor Beth Mauch responded to the data.

"I appreciate having this organizational chart as a reference and for transparency across the System. Following the changes and reductions during Administrative Optimization, which took place before I arrived, we are a lean and focused organization. We are very strong stewards of our limited financial resources ensuring that each position has a critical role in supporting our organization to support our students. This is important as we stabilize and grow in the years to come," said Mauch.

Green:

She met one of her best friends at Dartmouth who was also from Florida. She also started waiting tables again at a restaurant called TipTop Cafe in White River Junction, now called Time. She worked there during her second year while she was writing her thesis.

"I needed to, ya know, live," she said.

Green's dog Lola came with her from Florida to New Hampshire, but this loyal pup didn't mind one second.

"Lola's a big part of this story," Green said grinning. "Why did Brittney, at 20 years old, go and get this big giant dog from the Orlando pound? I still can't tell ya for sure why that happened. I just had to take her right then and there."

From New Hampshire, they took off across the country to Los Angeles, as Green had been accepted into UCLA's Ph.D. program for Cinema and Media Studies. In L.A., Green settled in a very small, 225-square-foot, bachelor efficiency apartment, which she said was about the size of her office. Equipped with a bathroom, a sink, a microwave and a mini fridge, Green started a new chapter of her life on Hollywood Boulevard.

Starting in a new place, across the country again in such a famous place was completely different and strange to Green.

"Holy cow was I scared of starting my Ph.D. at UCLA and I felt imposter syndrome from the moment I started," Green said.

It was at UCLA that Green met her best friend who would later also become her husband. He would help her through her Ph.D. journey, being there to support her through some of her toughest times.

"It's such a cliché to be like, we were friends and then we weren't, but it was like that and I didn't even think that was possible," Brandon said.

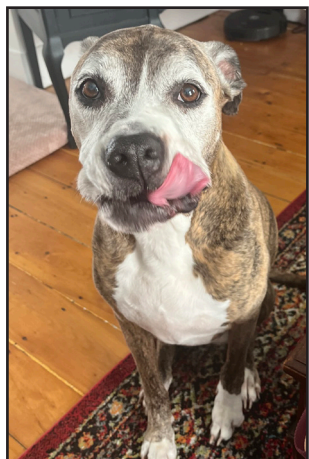
The two had been friends for a couple of years before their relationship developed into something more.

UCLA was a huge step for Green, one that would make her question whether or not what she was doing was what she wanted to do. She enjoyed what she was learning about, as since she studied film, that meant she got to watch all different kinds of TV shows.

"I think I'm the only person in my family that reads, if it's not the bible," she said.

But growing up, Green didn't have any books in the house, so her way of entertainment, was TV.

She was shocked to learn that there was another way to "do" TV other than making it,



COURTESY PHOTO
Britney Green's dog Lola has been with her throughout her travels.

starring in it, or watching it.

"Gilmore Girls" is one of the most impactful shows in her life. Watching the show as a young girl, she wanted to be like some of the characters she was watching on the screen.

"I knew I wanted to go to school like Rory, but I wanted to BE like Lorelai. I wanted to be this person, that like could talk to anyone," said Green

When COVID hit, the duo along with Lola, would move down to Florida to live with Green's parents.

But after months, Green decided she needed to move on. She was still supposed to be

working on her dissertation on gender and disability in media and television, but she instead started to look for jobs, eventually finding the open McNair director position at VTSU Castleton in 2022. She had applied for other jobs, but this was the job she wanted the most, and after getting the position, she, Brandon, and Lola took off once again to sweet old Vermont where they have been the past three years.

Being the director of McNair was everything Green had wanted. She is a mentor to young students, just like she was once.

"It was so hard when I loved what I did at work every day and then I had to come home and do this thing that I wasn't very good at," Green said talking about her dissertation.

"She comes home and she's crying, where she's just really sad or emotionally exhausted and she has that 1,000-mile stare," Brandon said.

Green said she feels that she's not a natural student in the way that she feels she's a natural mentor. However, that didn't deter her from finishing her dissertation and graduating as Dr. Green the summer of 2024.

"There were so many moments, so many moments, that I actually thought I was gonna drop out," she said.

As the director of McNair, her goal is to teach her scholars what graduate school is, how to apply, and eventually graduate with a graduate degree. Holding the doctor title herself gives inspiration to some of the students that she mentors.

"If she can do it, why not us," said McNair scholar Deacon Watson when referring to Green achieving doctor status.

While it was a difficult task for the director, her perseverance and determination to see it through got her there.

Her role as the McNair director has been an important one. Many of the scholars see Green as a motherly figure. Green herself calls the McNair scholars her "kids."

"Brit made me like chicken noodle soup when I was sick like a couple weeks ago," said student Sharon Asolmia Aganah.

Others talked about how likable and fun and animated she is.

"That woman has no control over her facial expressions," said another scholar, Rory Rivers-Rozell.

Green seems to be the person you can go to whenever you're in need, which can also be her downfall, as she will sometimes overbook meetings, try to do too many things at once.

"I think it's no secret that

Brit struggles with deadlines," said coworker Deborah "Debbie" Warnock, assistant director for McNair. Warnock, however, was hired to help Green with those issues, working in tandem together, and often complimenting each other's personalities.

"She is a raging extrovert," Warnock said.

The constant in and out of the people in the office makes it hard for Warnock to focus, but the two are slowly, but surely figuring out the best working style for each of them.

Back at home, Green turned the TV off and gave Lola a pet before going to bed to get ready for her next day at the McNair office. She's now experiencing the peace of not having a dissertation to write into the long hours of the night. Instead, she has more free time to cuddle with Lola.

Green has always helped those in need, from taking care of her mom whenever she would get ill to helping scholars get food during the summer. Those who know her say she is an amazing example of how perseverance and support can help one succeed in life.

"That's my favorite part. That I just didn't quit," she said.

Sustainability:

"People buy so many gifts, and this time of year especially, it's like the height of capitalism. I think it's great to incorporate sustainable gifts into the holidays," Smith added.

The Campus Sustainability Team, which includes faculty, students, and staff, is dedicated to cultivating a more sustainable campus and world.

"Anyone on campus can be involved if they're interested in sustainability," said Vermilyea.

The event aimed to offer an alternative to the typical consumer-driven holiday season, showing that it's possible to make thoughtful gifts without relying on mass-produced items.

The DIY card, wreath, and gift-making event was just one of the many ways the Campus Sustainability Team hopes to inspire students and staff to embrace sustainability. By encouraging the campus community to rethink waste and consumption, the team is promoting a more sustainable lifestyle year-round, Vermilyea

said.

The team meets every Thursday at 12:30 in the Geology lab and is planning to send out an email at the beginning of next semester for those interested.

With the holidays just beginning, the team hopes that their efforts will spark a shift in how people approach gift-giving and consumption, encouraging everyone to find creative ways to reuse and repurpose.



EMILY ELY
Sustainability Team members Charlotte Gerstein, Mary Droege, and Andy Vermilyea pose at the Sustainable Christmas event.

Rabies is a disease you don't want to get



A glimpse at rabies under the microscope.

By Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

I have written many times in my work that the goal of my writing is to inform you on information surrounding species' health. The goal of my writing is NOT to make

you scared or stressed about a certain situation or problem.

However, I do believe that sharing valuable information surrounding species health is extremely important.

The Green Mountain state is currently experiencing a serious health risk when it comes

to human and other species' health. The problem I am talking about is rabies, which researchers have found that the number of wildlife specimens (57) testing positive for the deadly viral brain disease has unfortunately increased steadily since 2020, according to a recent WCAX report.

The news outlet also states that the state of Vermont has administered 300,000 Rabies vaccines this year alone. This is in order to protect your pet and yourself. Fortunately, there has never been a human case of Rabies in Vermont. However, that certainly does not mean you can't be affected.

Rabies is a very serious health problem facing the United States. It is a zoonotic

disease, which means it can be transferred across different species. Rabies is transferred across different species through the saliva of infected species.

Zoonotic diseases are often caused by harmful germs that can be transferred from different animal hosts. Depending on the zoonotic disease, these illnesses can range in severity, from mild to serious and even death. When an animal has rabies, it is only a matter of time before they succumb to the disease if not treated.

Zoonotic diseases are very common in the United States and around the world. Many scientists estimate that more than 6 out of every 10 known infectious diseases in humans

can be spread from different species. Scientists also predict that a staggering three out of every four new or emerging infectious diseases affecting humans first present itself with a different species as a host, according to the CDC.

For rabies to pass from an infected animal to a human, the virus needs to be transferred from the saliva. This can happen in several ways, including bites, scratches, or if any wounds/scratches or eyes are exposed to the infected animal's saliva. Even though this viral infection is scary, there are some precautions that you can take to keep you and your pets safe.

If you see a nocturnal animal like a raccoon, skunk, bat,

possum during the daytime do not approach it. It is better to be safe than sorry. Even if an animal may seem normal, it is better to keep yourself safe. However, there are some key signs that an animal does have rabies, including, foaming at the mouth, odd behavior, and dirty and ruffled hair.

If you or your pet are bitten or scratched by a questionable animal, DO NOT wait to seek medical or veterinary assistance. If left untreated, rabies has a 100% fatality percentage. Finally, it would be very wise to vaccinate your pets, if they have not been vaccinated for rabies yet.

The NFL’s young QB dilemma

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The NFL has become a very quarterback-dominant league, where quarterbacks get a ton of credit when their team wins and most of the blame when they lose.

Around the league we’ve witnessed countless teams bench their highly touted young quarterbacks the moment things aren’t going well. Bryce Young and Anthony Richardson are the more recent examples, but this issue has gone on for quite a while now. And it’s posed the question as to whether or not the league has a quarterback development issue.

Obviously, there are a lot of factors that go into why playing quarterback in the NFL is hard, including a lack of continuity. Changes to the coaching staff happen every year whether a team is very good or very bad and that can make it difficult for young quarterbacks to adapt when there’s a new philosophy year in and year out.

NFL teams also rush rookie quarterbacks to start, which can stunt their growth as a player because some players need time to grow. Lastly the NFL is just a much faster game than college, which forces players to be a lot quicker in their decision making.

Players like Kenny Pickett, Trey Lance, Justin Fields, Zach Wilson and others have all been benched, and it doesn’t feel like this issue is going away anytime soon. But we’ve also seen a surge of quarterbacks who were written off as young players, being picked up by other organizations and thriving with the talent teams saw before they were drafted. Players like Baker Mayfield, Sam Darnold, and Geno Smith were all high draft picks but didn’t produce in the early parts of their career. They have now found success elsewhere without the pressure of having to live up to expectations.

But maybe this issue is happening throughout every level of football, and it’s only magnified once these quarterbacks get to the NFL.

In today’s era at all levels, quarterbacks play in pass heavy offenses where they’re asked to play in the shotgun and throw the ball a ton. What you don’t see, even at the youth levels, is quarterbacks playing under center utilizing play-action or using personnel with two running backs and a tight end.

Everybody uses a spread offense with four to five wideouts and maybe one back with the mindset of passing. And maybe that strategy works from youth football to college because of the talent gap. But once you get into the pros, everybody is a good player so you must have nuance in your offensive playbook to keep defenders honest. It’s hard to win when you ask your quarterbacks to go through their progressions and make the right reads when half of these guys have never experienced what it’s like to play within an offense that doesn’t ask you to sit in the shotgun and throw the ball every down.

So maybe the development of quarterbacks isn’t solely on the NFL but rather the culture shift of the game at all levels.

Another overlooked factor of why young quarterbacks are being benched so much is because the pressure ownership puts on head coaches to win in the NFL. Coaches decide to bench young quarterbacks who are struggling in large part because they feel veteran quarterbacks give their team a better chance to win. And that’s probably true, but the coaches only do that because they feel the pressure from ownership to win games. And if they don’t win they can potentially lose their job.

So, I think it goes a little bit deeper than the development part but rather coaches are afraid of losing their jobs if they’re not able to win games right now.

Which poses the question to NFL ownership of whether the development of a young quarterback is or isn’t more important than immediate team success.

Get to know women’s hockey’s Ellie Schliebner

By Annika Nelson
Castleton Spartan

Ellie Schliebner’s bedroom is cozy, with soft, warm lighting that gives a soft glow to the room.

The central structure in the room is a king-size bed with a puffy pink comforter that takes almost a cloud-like shape. Pillows lean comfortably against the headboard in odd sizes, some with plain white covers and others with a floral print, inviting you to sink into them.

A thin, transparent curtain on the side of the two windows lets sunbeams in, and with that, the room feels even warmer.

A few other small touches—the vase of fresh flowers, scented candle, and framed photos—make this bedroom personal.

Comfort, relaxation, and delicate elegance are words that define the atmosphere of this place.

Ellie. Ellen. Trudy. Pinky. Schliebs.

All of these are names that the junior at VTSU Castleton from Ottawa, Ontario, Canada goes by, and she is also a member of the VTSU Castleton women’s ice hockey team.

Growing up

Growing up, Schliebener was destined to play hockey.

Her father Andy played in the NHL for the Vancouver Canucks and instilled his passion and drive into her.

And growing up in Canada especially, hockey wasn’t just a sport for Schliebener.

It was a way of life.

The hockey culture runs thick in Ottawa, and for Schliebener, cold, snowy winters were an invitation to lace up her skates and get on the ice. From backyard rinks to local arenas, her childhood was a mixture of early mornings, late nights, and endless hours of practice culminating with the thrill of a game won.

Off the ice, much like her room, she’s laid-back and down-to-earth, with a little bit of attitude and a wicked sense of humor.

Once she’s on the ice, however, it becomes pretty evident that she’s a serious athlete who will give her sport nothing

less than all she has.

August

After just moving in into the apartment in August, Schliebener was dying to showcase her cooking skills to her roommates. One evening, she resolved to cook dinner for the whole house, promising them a “gourmet experience.”

Her friends were pretty thrilled, because Schliebener would always brag about her being good in the kitchen, but they had never seen her work magic live.

When they arrived, Schliebener greeted them in her pink apron.

“I’m making spaghetti tonight,” she said. “It’s going to be incredible.”

Her friends sat down, side-eyeing each other. They knew Ellie had a habit of trying to make recipes that were probably out of her skill level.

But this time seemed different. The smell of ground beef sizzling on the stove had them hopeful.

That was, until Schliebener entered the living room with this huge bowl of what she referred to as “my signature dish.”

Well, it was spaghetti. But with a little twist.

Schliebener had taken the whole packet of noodles, cooked them, then braided them into some type of pasta crown. There it was, a whole bowl of gluten-free spaghetti twisted into what looked like an unappealing version of a princess’s crown.

“Voila!” said Schliebener.

The room was silent as everyone tried to figure out a polite way to eat braided spaghetti.

Mikayla Brightman, one of Schliebener’s roommates, carefully took a small forkful and realized that Schliebener had forgotten to drain the noodles of their water, so they were soggy.

Really soggy.

“Trudy, it’s. Unique,” Nora Pollestad said.

Schliebener beamed, clueless.

“I know, right? It’s a new trend I saw on TikTok”, she said.

After a few “creative” adjustments involving a lot of napkins, everyone decided they’d never seen pasta quite like that. They also decided



CASTLETONSPORTS

Ellie Schliebener in her natural enviornment at Spartan Arena.

to stick to takeout orders the next time Schliebener was having dinner.

November

Loud footsteps and the sound of perfume bottles falling indicate Schliebener is home and awake.

On her dresser lays an array of different perfumes and lotions.

Anyone who knows Schliebener knows that she always smells pretty good.

She takes pride in it.

Because of all the different scents and sprays she uses, her bedroom floor tends to get quite slippery. While it may be an inconvenience for Schliebener, it provides a lot of laughs for her friends, and eventually herself once she gets over her initial embarrassment.

“A few days ago, I was running late for class, and I had to run back into my room to grab my water bottle, but I ended up slipping

and knocking over all my perfumes and makeup,” Schliebener said.

She described her fall as cartoonish.

“I felt like I slipped on a banana peel in slow motion,” she said.

After her fall, she said she was “looking for the cameras.”

Looking forward

Schliebener is a marketing and management major, and when asked about what she wants to do after college, she jokingly said “Be rich,” with a grin.

She says that she isn’t completely sure what she wants to do with her degree yet.

Schliebener is excited to continue her junior season of playing hockey and is excited with the team this year.

“I think we have a really special group, and everyone is really committed and excited about this year,” she said.

Men’s hockey finding their footing

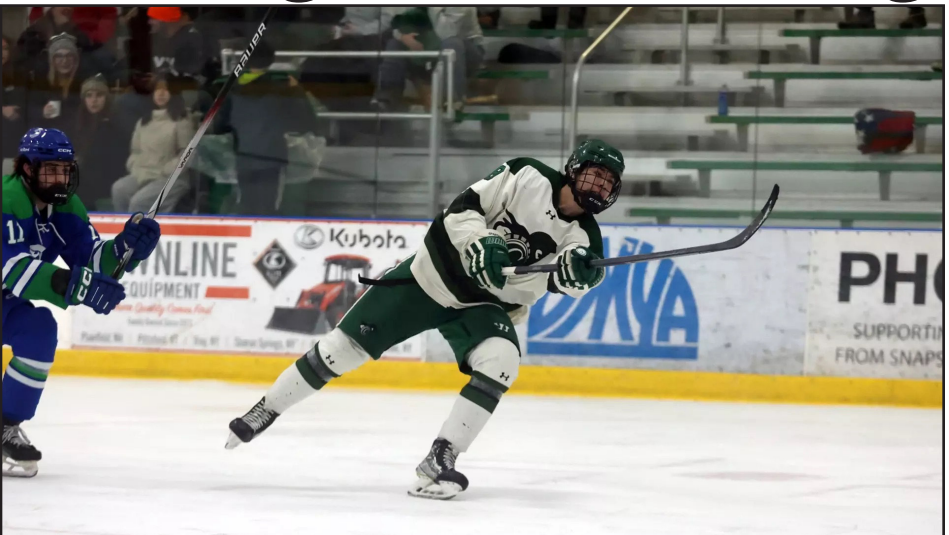
By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The Vermont State University Castleton men’s hockey team earned its first win of the season, defeating MCLA 3-1 in the opening round of the 2024 Terry Moran Invitational Tournament. Castleton got off to a strong start with Chance Heaphy scoring his first career goal less than two minutes into the game. The Spartans’ penalty kill was impressive, successfully defending all three of MCLA’s power-play opportunities. Despite a strong performance from MCLA’s goalie, Matthew Gover, who made 44 saves, MCLA managed to tie the game 1-1 in the first period with a goal from Cody White. In the second period, Castleton dominated offensively, outshooting MCLA 47-27. In the third period, Zach Papapetros scored to give Castleton a 2-1 lead, and although Heaphy was denied on a breakaway, the Spartans sealed the win with a power-play goal. Heaphy and Cam Reid assisted Avvi Tanasiyenko, who scored his first goal of the season to make it 3-1. This game put them into the final of this tournament to hopefully win the 2024 Terry Moran invitational title.

Luke Chakrabarti scored the game-winning goal in overtime to lead the Vermont State University Castleton men’s hockey team to a 7-6 victory over King’s College, securing the 2024 Terry Moran Invitational title. Chakrabarti was named tournament MVP, recording three goals and three assists. Josh Ward, with 45 saves across two games, was named goalie of the tournament. Josh stated, “Winning the tournament was

a big step in the right direction for our team. Being able to do that for Terry was all we wanted, and we must carry that into the coming weeks”. Zach Papapetros made the all-tournament team with a goal, an assist, and a +4 rating. The game was a back-and-forth battle, starting with King’s taking a 2-0 lead early in the first period. Castleton responded with Chakrabarti scoring to make it 2-1. The Spartans tied it in the second period with a goal from Josef Vyvial and then took their first lead on Andrew Stefura’s goal, assisted by Chakrabarti. Kings answered with a goal to make it 3-3, but Castleton regained the lead with a power-play goal from Emmett McHardy and a goal by Chakrabarti. King’s came back with two quick goals in the third to tie it at 5-5. Castleton went back ahead 6-5 on a goal from Stone Stelzl, but King’s answered with a power-play goal to send the game into overtime. In OT, Chakrabarti completed his hat trick by scoring the game-winner off a rebound from Stefura’s shot, securing Castleton’s victory.

The Vermont State University Castleton men’s ice hockey team lost to Saint Michael’s 2-1 in a Tuesday night game. Saint Michael’s improved to 8-3-0, while Castleton fell to 2-8-1. The game was scoreless in the first period, with Castleton’s Charles Watson making 12 saves in his collegiate debut. Saint Michael’s goaltender recorded a season-high 46 saves to secure the win. In the second period, Saint Michael’s took a 1-0 lead and Castleton responded with Chance Heaphy’s second goal of the season, assisted by Cam Reid and Aiden Robson, to tie the



CASTLETONSPORTS

Freshman standout Emmett McHardy, ripping the puck on net against Salve Regina.

game at 1-1. However, Saint Michael’s quickly scored a second goal to put them back in front, 2-1. Despite outshooting Saint Michael’s 47-28 and winning 38 faceoffs, Castleton couldn’t find the equalizer, and Saint Michael’s held on for the win, ending Castleton’s win streak.

On December 6th the Vermont State University team hosted Salve Regina in their 14th Annual teddy bear toss, with all bears going to the Rutland County Parent-Child Center. The game started with strong goaltending from both teams, as Josh Ward made 10 of his 17 saves in the first period and Cayden Bailey stopped 30 shots for Salve Regina. Salve Regina broke the deadlock early in the second period with a goal, they extended their lead with a powerplay goal and another goal in the third period to make it 3-0. Castleton fought back in the third period, outshooting Salve Regina 15-3 and getting three powerplay chances. With less than three minutes left, Andrew Stefura scored off a rebound from Luke Chakrabarti’s shot to make it 3-1. The Spartans quickly responded as Logan Dapprich scored his first career goal from long range, assisted by Zach Trempner and Chakrabarti, to bring the game within one at 3-2 with 1:41 remaining. Despite the late rally, Castleton couldn’t find the equalizer, and Salve Regina held on for the win. The teams will meet again for game two of the series, with Castleton also celebrating the 20th anniversary of Spartan Arena.

The Vermont State University Castleton men’s hockey team won their first New England Hockey Conference game of the season, beating Salve Regina University 5-3. Freshman Emmett McHardy had a standout game, scoring a hat trick, while Trevor Castino and Luke Chakrabarti also scored for Castleton. Junior goalie Josh Ward played a crucial role, making 41 saves for the win. The Spartans

were strong on the penalty kill, stopping all four of Salve Regina’s power play chances, with team captain Justin Stairs leading the effort. Stairs also assisted McHardy on his first goal, which came shorthanded.

“I think overall we were really happy with how we played. We got off to a great start early and it’s a great feeling to get that first conference win going into break,” Justin Stairs stated.

Salve Regina tied the game 1-1 in the first period, but Castleton dominated the second period, with McHardy scoring twice and Castino adding his first career goal to give the Spartans a 4-1 lead. In the third period, Salve Regina tried to rally but could not overcome Ward’s strong goaltending. After Salve Regina scored once more, an empty-net goal by Chakrabarti sealed the win for Castleton. The Spartans improve to 3-9-1 and will return to play in January against Babson College.

Men’s and women’s hoops look forward to second half

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton men’s basketball team looks to get on the right track before heading into break against Anna Maria College on the road. “The beginning of the season has brought some unforeseen challenges, but our guys have continued to battle through adversity,” said assistant coach, Joe Russell. The Spartans have seemingly been snake bitten on the road so far as the team sits with on 0-5 record on the road and a 1-7 overall record. Despite the results not falling in the Spartans favor so far

this season, the team believes that the second half of the season can be a much different outcome. “Through study hall sessions, practices, and games, the guys are growing together and becoming more familiar with each other’s play styles. We’re excited for the second half of our season, as we’ll be getting into conference play as well as gaining two additional players who will be great additions to the team,” Russell said. When the Spartans return to play in the new year, they kick it off against Fitchburg State then are right into the bulk of their conference play rattling

off nine conference games in a row. On the other hand, the women’s basketball team has been on a roller coaster of a season so far as they sit with a 3-1 record at home but a 3-6 record overall. Similar to the men, when the women come back, they will be jumping right into conference play after two out of conference games against Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Clarkson. “The season has been good so far. We’ve had a lot of games already and are excited to get back to it after break. We’re working really hard to be a contender in the LEC and

are pushing each other to get better,” said Emily Trepanier. The team currently has three players who have been leading the way all averaging double digit points. One of those is first-year Emily Dingmon, who is currently averaging a double-double with points and rebounds. Although the Spartans have had some ups and downs, the team is fairly young and does not have any seniors, which is a bright spot looking ahead but it also allows for the team to continue to build chemistry on the court for not only this year but next year as well.



CASTLETONSPORTS
Emily Dingmon dribbles towards the hoop.

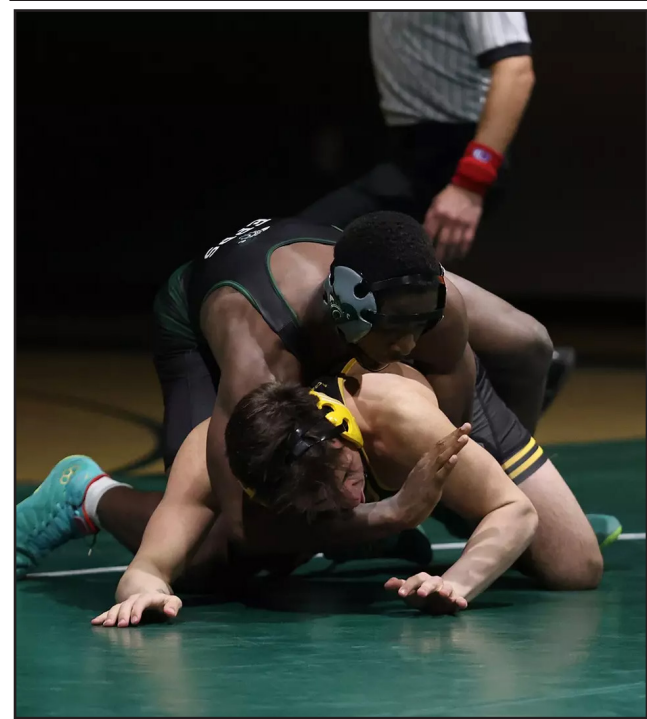
Hard work, discipline and Legacy

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The VTSU Castleton wrestling team has been one of the most prominent teams on campus in recent memory. The Spartans have a deep roster with skilled athletes across all weight classes and they’re led by Coach Scott Legacy. This team is led by an experienced coach who fosters a culture of hard work, discipline, and mental toughness. Legacy has built a culture that emphasizes teamwork and strong leadership from both players and coaches. “Everybody is brought into the culture and we all understand what it takes to be a nationally ranked team,” Legacy said. “The other thing is we believe in our philosophy of you’re only as good as the guy above you and beneath you. It’s not easy to get athletes to buy into, but it’s a fact and if you can get everyone to buy into that mindset that is when you can have success.”

The Spartans also have a well-rounded coaching staff that brings different levels of knowledge to certain aspects of the sport. Having that variety on the coaching staff enhances the wrestling experience ensuring athletes receive a quality amount of knowledge while balancing that out with a quality amount of support. The Spartans added graduate assistant Ryan Foutz onto the staff. Foutz, a Roanoke, Virginia native comes from Roanoke College. He always had aspirations of becoming a wrestling coach and felt Castleton’s winning culture was something he wanted to be a part of. “I’ve always loved wrestling and had success of my own in my wrestling career but in college I didn’t achieve all the goals I wanted to, so it motivated me to get into coaching to help others achieve their goals and fulfill their ability,” Foutz said.

It’s been tough for Foutz as he adjusts from being an athlete to his coaching role. Foutz is learning how to focus on the development and growth of others because he’s so familiar with focusing on himself. This transition demands a lot of adjusting fir the new coach because he not only has to also navigate the investment in others but also the team dynamics. “It’s a different culture from



CASTLETON SPORTS
Coach Scott Legacy celebrates his 100th win last December, top. Tylik Epps pins his opponent at the start of his 4-0 day at Penn College, bottom left. Drew Marchese helps secure first place at Penn College, bottom right.

what I’ve been used to because everybody here loves being around each other,” Foutz said. “Because the environment is so welcoming, everyone wants to be a part of the team and they all treat each other equally which is awesome.” The Spartans have garnered national recognition with their recent success at the Penn College Invitational and a sweep of the Stevens Tech Quad. Legacy is pleased with the program’s success and believes it’s made an impact on

both the school and the belief in what the team thinks they can achieve in the long-term. “I believe the team sees our recent success as representing Castleton in a special way and they’re very proud of that. The team as a whole appreciates the fact that we’re being recognized at the national level because it’s showing that all the work we’re put in is paying off,” Legacy said. Leadership always plays a crucial role in the success of a team as it shapes both

the culture and performance of the team. Legacy and the team understand it’s about creating an environment of accountability, motivation and support that drives the collective success each of them desire to have. But Legacy’s expectations for the leaders and veteran wrestlers goes further than their impact on the mat. “I expect our leaders off the mat to lead like they’re good students, be good community people, and always strive

to become a better person. I believe all of that leads you to doing good things on the mat,” Legacy said. “I think that too many times people look at what you have to do athletically and we kind of reverse it.” The Spartans have set a standard of excellence in Division 3 college wrestling. Their continuous relevance in the national spotlight has given the program a confidence that makes them believe that they’re national

title contenders. And rightfully so. Legacy has witnessed the growth of the team each season and he believes they have what it takes to bring home the championship. “We believe we can bring home the NCAA trophy and it’s not just what we want, but what we believe,” Legacy said. “Winning the championship would motivate us to strive for more and help us take another step into becoming better than what we already are.”

Women’s hockey looking to bounce back



CASTLETONSPORTS
Taylor Adams stickhandling with the puck on her way to scoring one of her hat trick goals against Worester State.

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The women’s hockey team is heading into the break this week, but before they do, let’s recap the last few contests. They hit the road for Boston at the end of the month, where they faced conference opponent the Beacons. In their game Friday, that top line of junior forwards for the girls of Moa Carlsson, Meg Aiken, and Ellie Schliebener found their touch early in this one. Late in the first, Umass Boston was able to find an answer and bring the game back to even. The second period started with a goal from Tori Griffin, 20 seconds into the period unassisted. After the quick start, both teams took a couple of penalties and the special teams had to battle it out. Again towards the end of the period, Umass Boston was able to keep the game alive. The third period proved to be a complete defensive battle as the game stayed even. However, with just under a minute left

in regulation, a Umass player made a spectacular rush dancing by two Castleton defenders and scoring on Freshman netminder Gianna McCusker. Despite the loss, McCusker made 28 saves and showed to be capable of taking some of the workload off of starting goalie for the Spartans, Victoria Bakopanos. The second match-up took place the following day, in which the Spartans had a strong start, outshooting UMass 10-3 in the first period. The second period began to get a little chippy, and we saw both sides taking time to sit down in the penalty box. Unfortunately for Spartan fans, assistant captain Meg Aiken took a big hit into the boards head-first in the second period and had to be stretchered off the ice. She would be ok, but a big loss up front for the Spartans. UMass would go on to score late in the second, and again early in the third, and freshman forward Carris Errickson would have the only answer which would

not be enough to earn important conference points. Next on the agenda for the women was number 3 ranked Middlebury. This matchup is one that is year in and year out difficult. However, the Spartans usually embrace the challenge. Again on the road, Bakopanos started between the pipes for the Spartans. Bakopanos made 56 saves in this matchup and gave up 5 goals against, maintaining a .918 save percentage. Despite her stellar performance in the net, the Spartans fell 5-0 as they could not generate very much of their own offense. Playing in the NESCAC conference again, the women then traveled to take on Williams. Bakopanos had the net again for this one, which is her seventh start this year and perhaps her biggest to date in a spartan jersey. Again, they were held scoreless in this one and eventually fell 4-0. But, Bakopanos did everything in her power to keep it even, making 63 saves to break a

program record for most stops in a single game. Bakopanos had now made 119 saves in her last two starts. She goes into the break with a 2.75 GAA and a .923 save percentage, a very strong campaign so far for her. Lastly was Worcester State, which was a matchup they needed to take over in. And so they did. Junior Defenseman Rainey Lay started off the scoring and from there the offense took off. Ellie Schliebener set up Moa Carlsson for the second of the game, who the team looks to for scoring. Sophomore Taylor Adams recorded her first career hat trick in this one, starting with a snipe on the power play. Rachel McNeil got in on the action, and tucked home a power play goal as well. And finally, we saw this offence explode a little in this one. Which we will hope to see more of in the new year. The girls will be back in action early January at home for their annual tournament, so make sure to keep and eye out.



NEWS

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Timotheé Chalamet channels Bob Dylan in new movie, "A Complete Unknown."

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Men's hockey recognizes their seniors leaving this season.

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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, February 7, 2025

Destined to perform

Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Ever since she was young, Cydney Taylor Krone knew she was destined to perform. Whether that was singing, dancing, or acting, the stage felt familiar. However, her path to achievement was not without its fair share of challenges.

"I've always, ever since I was very, very little, been kind of fascinated with characters," Cydeny Said.

She experienced bullying throughout her school days, which made her doubt herself, as well as voices telling her she wasn't good enough. But Cydney refused to allow others to define her, she was determined to prove them wrong.

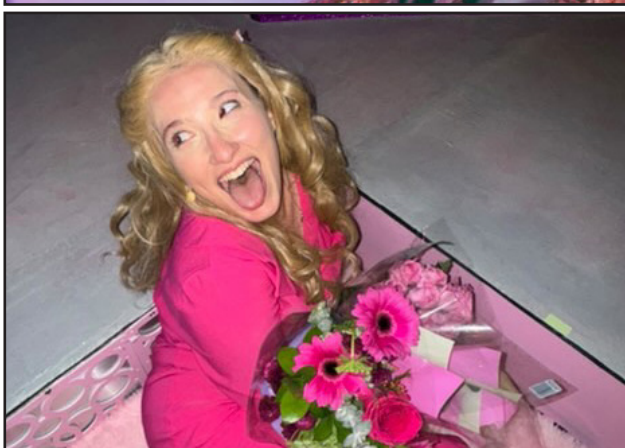
"People thought I was weird. Just, like, really treated me pretty badly. And I had, like, one friend," Cydney said.

Before landing the lead role as Elle Woods in California, she glided across the Castleton University stage. It was here that she began to genuinely discover her voice.

Her first production at Castleton was Guys and Dolls, which was intimidating for anyone let alone a freshman. She wasn't just playing one of the leads; she also had to share the stage with 40 alumni who had never rehearsed with the cast before. It was a high-pressure situation, but Cydney rose to the challenge.

"She handled it just beautifully," recalled Harry McEnerny, the previous director of Castleton's theatre program. "This showed me the kind of professionalism that Cydney has—even as a freshman."

That professionalism stretched beyond rehearsals. Unlike some students who practiced during sessions, Cydney spent devoted time in the dance studio developing her



Cydney Taylor Krone in her element on the stage at Castleton, bottom right, and New York City, top, and as Elle Woods in her current production of 'Legally Blonde' in California.

"She would go down into the dance studio in the middle of her afternoons and work on her characters, her songs, her lines—alone, for hours and hours at a time," McEnerny said. "She wanted to give her best performance, so when it came time for the show, she was consistent. Never missed a note, never missed a beat."

Her time at Castleton should have been filled with more performances, more songs, and more dances, but when the COVID-19 pandemic struck during her junior year, Big Fish was canceled, which she was the lead. Cydney refused to let her college career finish without one more performance.

In her senior year, she performed an hour-long

performance that included songs, dances, and even a short film. She sang, danced, and acted in front of a socially distanced audience of about 15 people.

"No one else did that," McEnerny said. "She didn't want her career to just stop. She was the only one who went, 'I'm going to perform.'"

Her hard work paid off.

Cydney made her professional debut in March 2022 at Desert TheatreWorks in California, playing Audrey in Little Shop of Horrors. After this performance, it landed her a season contract, with roles in Gentlemen's Guide to Love & Murder, White Christmas, and Escape to Margaritaville.

Then, in January 2024, she earned her dream role as Elle

Woods in Legally Blonde: The Musical. It was a full-circle moment. Cydney, like Elle, had been underestimated. She, like Elle, had been informed that she wasn't enough. But she proved everyone wrong with her determination, self-belief, and persistent work ethic.

"I always identified with Elle Woods," Cydney said. "With persistence, hard work, believing in yourself, and never giving up, a lot can happen."

McEnerny wasn't surprised by her success.

"There are thousands of people who can sing, dance, and act that role," he said. "But why do you cast Cydney? Because she's the kind of person you want to work with—kind, generous, hardworking. That's why she's going to have a career."

Cydney Krone's journey exemplifies resilience. She refused to let the people who doubted her the most, define her. She made her success and didn't wait for someone to hand it to her.

Through the issues she faced with bullying, no one taking her seriously, and turning to bigger and better things, Elle was a character that healed something in Cydney.

"Elle Woods is something that I needed to do for me spiritually, to be able to walk into this kind of new era of my life," Cydeny said. "It was a role that I needed to prove to myself that I could get to the other side of well, and I'm glad I did it for that"

Now, as she steps onto the stage as Elle Woods, she stands not just as a performer, but as proof that with passion and perseverance, dreams do come true.

Now, as Elle Woods takes the stage, she is more than performing; she is proof that with dedication and drive, dreams can be realized.

COURTESY OF CYDNEY KRONE

VTSU Castleton Inspires inclusion and equality at Convocation

Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

An enthusiastic crowd gathered in the Vermont State University Castleton Casella Theater on Jan. 30 as speakers

celebrated inclusion and diversity in recognition of Martin Luther King Day.

The event included guest speaker Al Wakefield, who created the "Declaration of Inclusion," which he hopes will

span beyond Vermont.

The event opened with VTSU Dean Cathy Kozlik recognizing an important historical figure in black history.

She recognized James Wheldon Johnson, a historical

black activist and poet, and his work which helped usher in the "liberty of black Americans." His song "Lift Every Voice" was then performed by the VTSU Castleton Choral.

Kozlik then welcomed newcomers and alumni to the new semester and remembered former VTSU Dean Honoree Fleming, who was killed last year on the nearby Rail Trail.

She praised the Student Government Association and everyone involved in making the last semester so successful. She acknowledged the efforts of faculty, staff and students, including "Professor Dave Blow's 'Help Us Help Them' event" and the collaboration of men's hockey with the "Breaking the Ice on Mental Health" initiative.

Kozlik kept the mood positive as she acknowledged setbacks, like the water pipe break in Woodruff Hall. She thanked the disaster for the new flooring in the hall.

After reflecting, Kozlik encouraged "Let's not forget the celebrations ... Let's all reflect on the great moments."

Kozlik introduced VTSU Professor Andre Fleche, who began by offering his praise and encouragement to students.

He then announced the accomplishments of the past semester such as "federally funded Head Start programs" and the Community Journalism Initiative. He acknowledged the broadcasting of VTSU student film "Error 404: Books Not Found," which was produced with the help of Professor Sam Davis-Boyd.

"Congratulations to all

those involved," said Fleche.

He then concluded with a sincere, positive message.

"Have a great semester," he said.

Fleche introduced VTSU Castleton SGA President Thomas Kehoe to the stage. The crowd erupted into laughter as he joked about how his hair looked. Kehoe gave arguably the most encouraging and uplifting speeches of the night.

He told the audience the "energy and enthusiasm you bring every day helps this University thrive."

"Each of you plays a crucial role," he said.

He gave a special shoutout to seniors, saying, "Once a Spartan, always a Spartan."

Kehoe left an inspired audience with encouraging words of advice.

"Speak up and leave your mark," he said before the crowd cheered on in unison as Kehoe exclaimed, "Go Spartans!"

VTSU Chief Diversity Officer Paul Yoon then gave a brief background and introduction of the event's special guest speaker Al Wakefield.

He introduced Wakefield as the founder of the "Declaration of Inclusion Initiative."

Yoon gave a hopeful and heartfelt remark, claiming he hopes that "we as a community can live up to our country's ideals."

Wakefield entered the stage with his trusty flute, stating that he liked to bring it with him wherever he goes, which incited light-hearted chuckles from the audience.

He introduced himself and

then acknowledged his admiration for VTSU.

"It's good to see a university taking part in what goes on in town," he said.

He explained that "very successful, very nice people graduate from Vermont State University."

Wakefield then led the audience in rehearsing the Vermont "Declaration of Inclusion," which condemns racism and welcomes all people regardless of race, religion, gender identity, age, sexual orientation.

"That is the Declaration that has been signed by 160 towns," he claimed afterward.

Wakefield continued his thoughtful views about Vermont and even added in a joke saying, "Vermont is a great state in terms of age...Vermont is a balding state in terms of age," which garnered giggles from the audience.

He discussed his past endeavors and encounters, which led to the creation of the Declaration of Inclusion. He explained how his experiences in door-to-door Avon sales and marketing gave him the professional tools he needed to engage people in his proposal.

"It was not easy," he remarked.

He explained how the Northern part of the state seemed to be more resilient to passing the declaration, but that Rutland County was the second most responsive to it. He presented a list of towns that have adopted it.

See 'Convocation' on page 6



ROBERT FRANKLIN AND LEO RICHARDSON

Scenes from the VTSU Castleton convocation ceremony on Jan. 30, including a speech by VTSU President David Bergh.

Shocking and aweing America into a lul?

You may have heard recently the expression “shock and awe” from Republican sources or even the Trump administration itself. As in, the Trump administration once sworn in is going to shock and awe the people.

I believe it is being said in a positive tone. What “shock and awe” really means in this context is that there will be an overwhelming amount of information and news and soundbites, along with a great number of “actions” from the president.

All of it, to keep the news cycle quick and flash the next shiny talking point. This is a political strategy that is not unique to Trump, nor new to him. We have been seeing this for nearly 10 years now.

I implore those of us disheartened by Donald J. Trump to try not to allow our pea-size attention spans, completely controlled by TikTok and Instagram to allow for us to move on from the outright disingenuous, dishonest, and disgusting things he says and does on a semi-daily basis.

So, let me update you on what it is President Trump has done since being sworn into office.

All of that big talk from Trump while running for president about tariffs. Like, all of those times he misrepresented what a tariff was and voters believed him in some places.

You know, the tariffs Trump said he was going to put on China. Well, turns out Trump will be putting 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico.

No word on Trumps stance when it comes to his cheap labor, communist, authoritarian friend. Oh, and news flash: the American consumer will still be the one who bares this cost.

The first major event to occur under the Trump presidency was a commercial airline flight heading over the Potomac that had a collision with a blackhawk helicopter belonging to the U.S. military.

Now, this is a rare event to say the least that is deeply tragic and cost many civilian casualties. Our fearless leader responded not by giving a heartfelt speech, condolences to the family affected, updating the public of facts surrounding the case, and supporting those trained to investigate what exactly happened.

Instead, the insecure orange man blamed Joe Biden, Obama, and DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion). And before you say “well, maybe he’s right. What were the two military helicopter pilots race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation?”

They were two straight white guys. To be clear, the president’s response to a tragedy was to get on live television and wildly speculate about an incident he knew nothing about.

And more deplorable, he used it in an attempt to further his political agenda, that being, getting rid of DEI.

The other major news story in the Ameican political climate was Elon Musk at the inauguration.

More specifically, a gesture he made twice. It seemed to be a salute of the German kind from say early 1940’s?

The people defending this have since floated a couple alternative ideas as to what was meant by the gesture. One being that it is actually an ancient roman salute he does, not the German kind. Pretty weak argument after you watch the video.

The other alternative floated is Elon Musk suffers from autism or an adjacent dissability that geniuses possess, one that makes it hard to understand the social cues.

That is a much more stable an argument if you believe Elon is a genius. He is certainly not someone with great social skills. Just watch the clip.

Either way, you and I probably can agree that nobody should be getting on stage in front of thousands of people at the president’s inauguration and gesture twice anything remotely similar to the gestures he made. It shouldnt matter whether or not you respond well to social cues.

Oh, not to mention, Musk using his social media platform X and his celebrity to genuinely endorse a far right political party in Germany. Look it up.

Just to rattle off a couple other notable moves Trump has made since being in office, he has pulled from the WHO (World Health Organization), similarly pulled from The Paris Climate Agreements.

He has rescinded birth place citizenship, is suggesting immigrant concentration camps, has roled back DEI, is actively attempting to roll back many government funded benefits, has halted all Federal aid, and don’t get me started on RFK or Trump’s pick for defense secretary.

The one bright spot is that all of these executive orders Trump is signing will most likely not hold up in court. Some might, some won’t.

But know this, Trump still can’t just do what ever he wants. He his beholden to systems of governance and to the courts, and though he would like to answer to nobody and nothing, he still does.

Please keep it that way. Lastly, don’t take my word for it. Go and research what is happening, take an interest, form your own opinion. Ciao for now.

- Jackson Edwards

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JOE VYVIAL

God’s green or Devil’s lettuce?

There are two types of people in this world: people who see cannabis as god’s green and people who see it as the devil’s lettuce.

Formally known as the gateway drug, marijuana long ago got classified as a class 1 drug along with hard drugs like heroin, cocaine and meth.

But that’s the first myth, because according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most people who consume cannabis do not go on to use harder drugs.

The people who do go to do harder drugs tend to already have higher risk of addiction due to a multitude of factors like family history, drug availability, social isolation, depression and having peers that have a substance abuse disorder.

Marijuana instead has actually been shown to help treat alcohol and drug addiction, according to a Medical News Today article titled “What are the health benefits and risks of cannabis” written by Tom Rush, further debunking the myth of marijuana as a gateway to harder drugs.

Myth number two is that marijuana is harmful and has no medical benefits.

Marijuana is said to cause lung cancer, psychosis, dam-



age the respiratory system and other medical problems, but this is simply not true.

It is actually the contrary as cannabis has been shown to help treat depression, cancer, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, and chronic pain, the article states.

Patients have also reported that it has helped relieve them of insomnia, anxiety, spasticity and pain.

The last myth is that you can overdose on cannabis.

“No one has ever died from a cannabis overdose.(.)” said Harvard psychiatry professor Lester Grinspoon in an inter-

view with Life Science Intelligence.

According to “Top 10 Myths about Medical and Recreational Cannabis” by Alivia Taylor, there has never been an adult death that can be attributed to cannabis. But while it is not likely a person can die from consuming too much cannabis, it can lead to some discomfort and temporary side effects.

While there are many benefits to marijuana, there are still some risks to its consumption.

Cannabis can lead to an increased risk of mental health disorders like schizophrenia and can exacerbate existing

symptoms of bipolar disorder.

Smoking cannabis has also been shown to cause respiratory disease as the smoke can cause scarring in the respiratory system and damage blood vessels in the lungs.

Marijuana is also very bad for women who are pregnant or have recently giving birth and are breastfeeding.

According to “Myths and facts about marijuana use” by the Department of Health Services, consuming cannabis while pregnant or breastfeeding can lead to affects in the baby’s brain development.

This can make it so when the child hits school age, he or she will be more likely to have problems with attention, behavior, memory, delayed reading skills and depression.

Cannabis was once demonized due to the myths told in years past, but even though it is harmful in some ways with excessive use, cannabis is now seen as less of gateway drug that will give you cancer and more as a medicine with many different health benefits.

Gods green or devil’s lettuce?

The facts debunk the myths.

- Isiah Hughes

My last first day

On Tuesday, Jan. 21, I had first day jitters for the last time. I packed my bag.

I looked at my schedule a thousand times to make sure I knew where my classes were.

I’d hoped to make good first impressions on new professors.

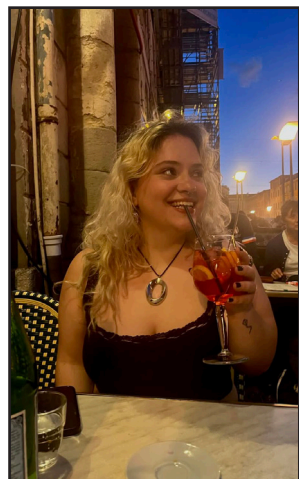
All for the very last time, as I am a second-semester senior.

It’s weird finally being here. Seventeen years of school to walk across a stage and enter the Real World. Where I’ll get a Real Job and have Real Problems and a Real Life.

That’s how adults always talked about it at least.

I’m relieved I still have a whole semester left since I don’t feel quite prepared for the realness of it all.

Everything feels in its place. This is the first semes-



Jess Emery

ter I’ve ever had a schedule I really like (I have Fridays off! Yay!). I have classes with my favorite professors (shoutout Flo Keyes and Dave Blow for

helping me to the finish line of my education).

I have a really strong group of friends who I spend time with every week. I feel really secure in my major.

Now all that is left is four months and graduation. It really has gone by in such a flash. I look back on the last four years and see how much of grown. I think back on role models I had as a first- and second-year student and I now see myself in that position for my younger friends.

Time is moving fast, but I’m so excited to not be focused on the future.

This is one of the first times I feel still. I’m cherishing my classes, friends, and life here in Castleton and I’m not just thinking about some other time

and place I’d rather be.

The last four years have really changed my life. It’s weird how people talk about looking back on moments that change your life, and I am currently, knowingly, in one of those moments.

A bit daunting, to be honest, because there’s no way this time isn’t going to affect me forever.

Now, that being said, let’s all take a moment to knock on wood that I’m not missing any graduation requirements. It would be super awkward if I said all this just to not graduate in May.

- Jess Emery

Fresh Perspective: Getting adjusted

The months leading up to my arrival at Vermont State University Castleton were filled with nothing but excitement.

That was, until the days started to go by faster, and move-in day went from three months to go to only three more days left.

When the time came to say goodbye to my family, my room, and my cat, the long six-hour ride was filled with nothing but worry and dismay.

However, once I arrived, after a few awkward ice breakers, I started to get used to being away from home. I learned to love it.

I play field hockey here. Although preseason was rough, having the support and camaraderie of my teammates made it all worth it. We even ended up making it to the Champion-



Caitlin Connelly

ships. Even though we lost in the end, not one moment from my first season was undermined. Playing this sport connected me with some of the best girls I have ever met.

In addition, I was fond of my classes. In particular, I actually really enjoyed my statistics class. I’ve always hated math and it has never been my strong suit. However, my statistics class here ended up

being my favorite class last semester. Another class that I thought was really intriguing was Cinema Studies. We learned the process behind making movies, as well as editing our favorite films.

I liked the small environment, and the one-on-one connections with professors because of the class sizes.

Sometimes I dislike how small our campus is, but for the most part it’s pretty nice. Everyone knows pretty much everyone, and most classes are only a five-minute walk away.

Skiing and snowboarding is a really big thing here. I live with some girls on the ski team. I had never gone skiing before, but my friends taught me. While it was really hard at first, and frustrating, I grew to love it. I’m not very good, but it’s a lot of fun.

There were times where school felt hard. Being away from home for so long was tough. Especially when I could not go home for fall break because of field hockey, but my twin brother and friends could.

Overall, though, I have an enjoyable outlook toward Castleton. Sometimes there are a few rough patches, but I move past them.

And even when I miss home, the minute I return, I want to come back. I really like my experience on the field hockey team here. I suggest playing a sport here at Castleton, for it gives you a group of people to connect with and build great friendships with.

- Caitlin Connelly

New semester brings new beginnings and frigid temps



Kallie Haynes, top left, walks to her first class of second semester. English professor Candy Fox lectures during the first week of class.

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Plumes of warm breath streamed from the mouths of both students and faculty as they trudged up and down the sidewalks of campus the first week back to classes with temperatures consistently well-below freezing.

The first week back from winter break is always a bittersweet mix of reconnecting with friends, new classes and

schedules, dry hands and fresh beginnings.

But the beginning of 2025 is looking to be off to a great start for VTSU Castleton students and staff.

“I’d give it a solid 8.9 out of 10,” VTSU student Daniel Wright said.

The great start to the semester for Wright was helped by the fact that his only class for Tuesdays got canceled during the first week and the flexibility in his schedule is great for

perfecting his gym routine.

“I am most excited about establishing a solid gym schedule and seeing friends,” Wright said.

VTSU English professor Candy Fox said she is thrilled to be back at campus and intrigued to get to know all the students, which is always her favorite part.

“It’s been fabulous!” she said. “Energy is good, students are great, everyone is paying attention. They’re motivated.

Bright shiny faces. I’m just very excited.”

Sophomore Brookelyn Kimball is off to a smooth start as well since she has familiar professors and is already at home with the campus.

However, Kimball is most excited for the new opportunities this semester is already bringing her.

“I just applied to be a peer mentor,” she said. “I am very excited to see where that goes!”

Kimball explains how she is not too overwhelmed with changes in her schedule and is just ready to get past the first week of syllabus review and fired up to dive head-first into the semester.

On the other hand, for some, getting used to a new schedule and routine can be one of the hardest parts of a new semester.

“I’m definitely nervous about adjusting to my new schedule. I’m not really good with change, and having different professors and different class times is a bit overwhelming for me,” said VTSU student, Clarabel Redondo.

Like Redondo, Wright also explains that he is having some nervous feelings. He anxiously shared how Wednesday’s for him are packed with back-to-back classes, then booking it to the gym, and sometimes followed up by work at the Rutland rock climbing gym.

For others, the first week back has been a little different as break may have been a little shorter.

VTSU student and women’s hockey player Annika Nelson has been back on campus with the hockey team since

December 28.

“It was definitely a weird switch from just playing hockey every day to having to go to classes, but after the first couple of days, I was back into the groove,” Nelson said.

She said that the thing making her the most nervous for the second semester are her online classes, since she has never taken one before and is scared about missing work. Although, so far so good for Nelson and staying on top of work.

Similar to Nelson, Fox is also faced with online classes and is navigating a routine for her first Connections 3 online class. Overall, though, she said she is excited about the new course.

Good vibes and high intentions for the first week back at VTSU Castleton is what keeps our campus thriving and the staff filled with joy.

“Watching students grow while getting to know each other is an amazing process to be a part of, and so inspiring. That’s why I love to teach!” Fox said with a glow of passion in her eyes.

Genny’s Journey

VTSU Castleton grad talks about past struggles that led to current happiness

By Andrew Martel
Spartan Contributor

Genevieve Holder transitioned from a strict, tiny Christian school in Germany to a chaotic, rowdy American school. As she navigated her unique upbringing, the 2023 VTSU Castleton graduate discovered that the desire to fit in can lead to a suffocating fear of judgment and struggle for acceptance.

However, underneath all anxiety and fear lies a strong woman who doesn’t let her insecurities determine her future.

Holder, who goes by Genny, was born in Texas and then three years later moved to Wiesbaden, Germany. After her mother attempted homeschooling, she attended a private Christian K-12 school that had exactly 18 students, making her one of only two in her class. However, when she came back to the States, everything changed.

She realized two things: kids are really rowdy and misbehaved, and that she was ahead of her class to the point of being bored and unable to pay attention in class.

“I came here at the end of second grade, and they moved me to third grade,” she said. “I didn’t get along with my teacher because I was so far ahead academically, and I’m not saying that to brag I was just so bored, like I already know how to write cursive!”

This made it very hard for her to adjust to her new school environment. It’s safe to say she had a complicated upbringing, and her schooling years were tough for her.

Things got worse when she developed a severe case of Emetophobia, an extreme fear of vomiting. It all started in the lunchroom at her school when she was in elementary school.

“One day I had a stomach bug and I went into the lunchroom and I ate lunch like normal and I ended up throwing up in front of the entire school,” she said. “The whole school ate lunch all at the same time and I threw up like a huge puddle all over the floor in front of the entire school.”

After this embarrassing moment, she became afraid to

eat in front of anyone, which kicked off her eating disorder. She would have frequent panic attacks when simply going to a restaurant in fear of possibly throwing up in front of people again.

It escalated to the point that her mother, Julie Eagan, was contacted by Holder’s principal about her refusing to eat lunch every day.

“The principal called us and said, ‘Genny won’t eat and she needs to eat’ and they said someone’s going to have to come in and she was going have to be evaluated by a doctor,” Eagan said. “Me and my husband figured this would pass and she would get hungry eventually and that she’s fine. We had a hard time thinking there was anything wrong with her because no parent wants to think there’s something wrong with our child. We always hope for the best for our children.”

This constant fear plagued Holder for many years of her life and while not as severe, it still affects her.

“In high school, I was struggling with two main things: my eating disorder, and my sh*tty relationships,” she said. “I won’t give his name, but my first boyfriend was with me for a year and a half and in that time, being the same height I am now, I dropped down to 108 pounds and that was definitely not good. I had just got to a point where I didn’t wanna eat at all because I was so afraid of throwing up,” she said. “I would rather run a marathon, write an essay, be a tax accountant, anything other than throwing up. That’s how deathly afraid I was of it. I still do, to this day, but not as bad.”

Her relationships didn’t help her in this difficult time. One was extremely controlling, another had mental issues of his own. She was cheated on, and one leaked revealing photos of her to social media simply because she didn’t answer his phone call.

However, one past relationship she highlights the most is the one with her ex-husband, with whom she had her now 5-year-old son, Aeron.

“We ended up getting married that summer because his



grandmother was very close to passing because she had Alzheimer’s. It was really important for her to be there when he got married because she really wanted to see all her grandkids be married,” Holder said. “So, I said f**k it let’s just do it, let’s get married.”

But she grew unhappy in this relationship over time, and it became obvious to her mother and other family members.

“I was always worried, but didn’t want to get into her business and push her away. It didn’t help that her ex-husband was very controlling and all of us saw it. She wanted to get married, and it was a spur of the moment thing. Her grandmother wanted them to do it, and they were just like why the F not,” Eagan said.

After her ex-husband cheated on her, she was separated from him, but not officially divorced when she would meet Sam Holder.

“So, I met this cowboy in Oklahoma, and on the outside of Christianity, I romanticized that life of wanting to be a wife that goes to church. I want to be a mom that raises her children in the church, like those women have everything they want and that’s probably not true for everyone, but I wanted that so bad and when I met Sam, it seemed like that was the family that he came from,”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GENNY HOLDER AND ANDREW MARTEL

Genny Holder hiking with her husband Sam and her son Aeron, top. Holder posing at graduation, bottom.

she said

Sam Holder is a rugged comedian and has been a light for Holder in recent years as she discovers herself and where her life is going. Sam met Genny for the first time in person on April 15, 2020 after previously communicating through social media apps.

“So, I was driving up, and I saw her get on Exit 18, and so we were on the phone while I was driving and I was like, ‘hey are you driving in front of me?’ and she says ‘yeah I think so.’ So it became this awkward thing where we were both awkwardly anticipating meeting each other,” Sam said. “I hugged her, gave her a kiss, and I was like, hey, do you wanna see me rope this sign, because obviously I brought my rope with me because there were so many cows up here to be herding.”

She eventually attended Castleton University where she majored in psychology and

graduated in 2023.

One night she was in the costume department of the Fine Arts Center when a student named Brandon Burmeister approached her about an acting opportunity. There are two versions of this project she is asked to star in: a play production, and a short film, both of which are crafted from the same script.

See Genny on page 6

Standout Spaces: Unlikely birth of a Castleton friendship



EMILY ELY
Zoe Ukasik and Desiree Mendez in their dorm.

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

Hey! I’m Emily, the author of the blog “Standout Spaces,” where we’ll dive into the unique ways students turn their dorms into their own personalized havens. From the peaceful minimalism of one student’s calm oasis, to another’s loud and artistic vibe of a space no two rooms are the same and I’m here to show you that! Many students have tips on how to make their space usable by reshaping and remodeling, so let’s explore!

The way Zoe Ukasik and Desiree Mendez became roommates is a funny story. And in fact, they didn’t start off as roommates.

Mendez had been paired

with a different roommate during the summer. But due to a mix-up involving a gender-neutral name, her roommate turned out to be a male football player, not the female student she had anticipated.

Once the mixup became clear to Mendez, the football playing roommate asked her, “so do you still wanna be roommates or naw?”

She chose “naw” and that’s when Ukasik took the open position.

When you walk into Ukasik’s and Mendez’s dorm room, you’re met with a whimsical wonderland that reflects both of their quirky tastes. It felt like walking into a concrete jungle of lush greenery and a small art gallery of vibrant posters.

The walls are plastered with collections of art; retro band posters, and a few funny

pictures of friends and family. But, their pride and joy, however, is their windowsill. It’s lined with an explosion of succulents that are different shades of green and multiple shapes and sizes draping over the sill.

When asked what they like best about their room, both of them note the two-toned baby blue and cream walls, the high ceilings, the perfect view of the sunset each night, and how they are able to watch “the sports channel” whenever they want.

Hoff Hall, and their room specifically, overlooks all of the sport fields. Just from their window, in non-winter months of course, they are able to watch soccer, football, baseball and softball seemingly at any time, any day of the week.

There is always something going on directly next to them,

which is almost always entertaining. Because of this, they don’t mind the whistles and scoreboard buzzer that much.

When asked if they had any tips or ways they were able to maximize their dorm space, Mendez shared how she was able to push her drawers under her bed with the perfect amount of space to put her shoes on top.

Ukasik loved the idea saying, “No, honestly when I moved in and you had that shit done, I was like ‘holy shit, she’s got it together.’”

These roommates are a perfect pair and their room compliments both of them perfectly.

Maddie on the street

By Madeleine Lindgren
Castleton Spartan



Question:
What's the funniest lie you've ever told?



Zach Papapetros Senior
"Sometimes when people ask me what college I go to, I say UVM. No one knows what Castleton is."



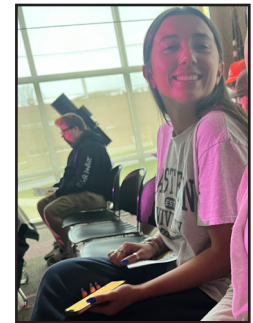
Josh Ward Junior
"One time in NYC I met a guy at a bar from Australia and convinced him I was from France because I can speak french. He believed it the whole time until I started speaking English at the end of the night."



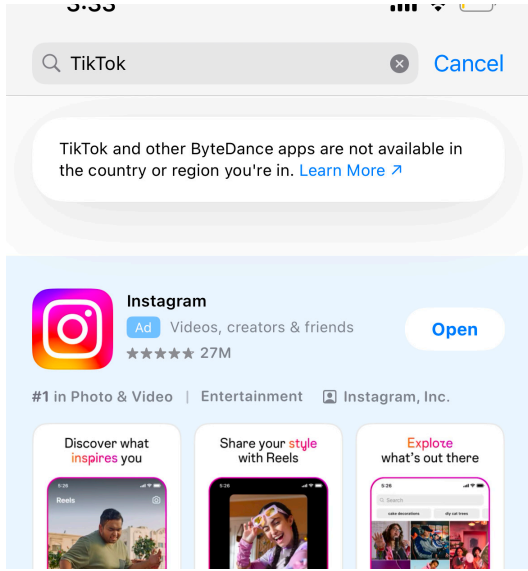
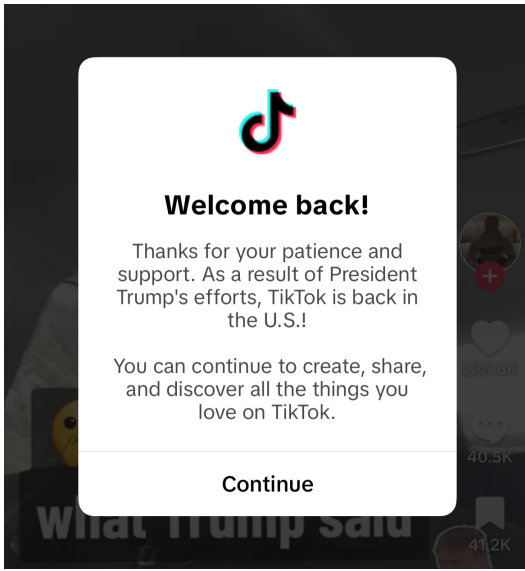
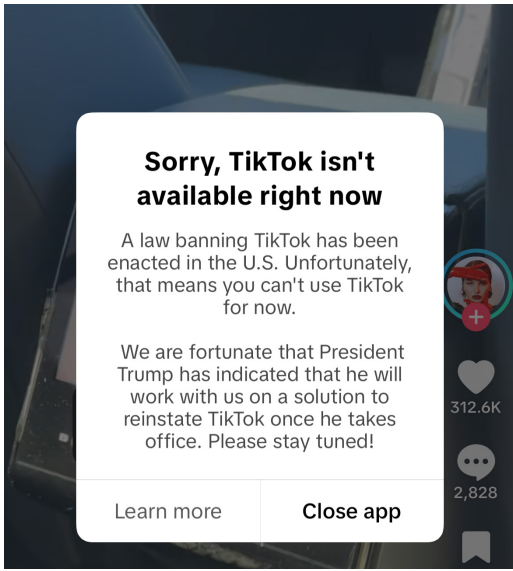
Aiden Robinson Sophomore
"I told a lie that I stole the Mona Lisa from an art museum."



Allie Galante Sophomore
"When I was younger I would tell people that I've been to all these crazy trips out of the country but I've actually never been out of the country."



Emma Patrissi Junior
"I have two. Today I told my roommate there was a raccoon under my bed, then I told her yesterday that someone in my class thought I was Kim Kardashian."



COURTESY JESS EMERY

This screenshot, above left, popped up when you entered TikTok on Jan. 18. Another notification, above middle, from when TikTok returned on Jan. 19. TikTok is no longer available for purchase in the app store, above right.

The ban and revival of TikTok

By Jess Emery
CastletonSpartan

On Jan. 18, the app TikTok went dark.

Users who opened the app got a message saying "A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now."

Then message then stated, "We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office."

Before the app was banned, many users were speculating the reasons why?

"I felt that it was a blatant and obvious attempt at censorship. The government clearly feels threatened by the fact that we are able to access so much information through so many sources and people," said VTSU Castleton student Erin Forkin.

Fellow student Caitlin Connolly viewed the banning in a different light. She was less concerned about the information she'd be missing out on because none of us would have access to the app.

"I was fine with that because nobody else would have it so it wouldn't be like I'm missing out on anything on TikTok,"

she said.

The app was banned earlier than anyone expected. Users were shocked and disappointed when they realized they couldn't get back in the app.

"I freaked out when it first got banned because it was two hours early and my TikTok was lagging so I exited out of it and refreshed it and all of sudden it just stopped working," student Carly Centeno said.

Although the ban was upsetting, Forkin had hopes it would lead to less screen time.

"I kept it on my phone because I was curious, but I felt relieved that I wouldn't be on my phone as much and less likely to doom scroll for too long," Forkin said.

To the surprise of many, the app was only banned for about 12 hours. When people returned to the app, they received another notification similar to the one before the ban.

It read, "Thanks for your patience and support. As a result of President Trump's efforts, TikTok is back in the U.S.! You can continue to create, share, and discover all the things you love on TikTok."

Some found the messages confusing or a little misleading.

"That honestly shocked me since I knew Trump was against TikTok, but all of a sudden,

his views changed. MAGA's were even speaking out about how our generation should be 'grateful' that he's trying, but last time TikTok was on the chopping block they were supportive of a ban," Forkin said.

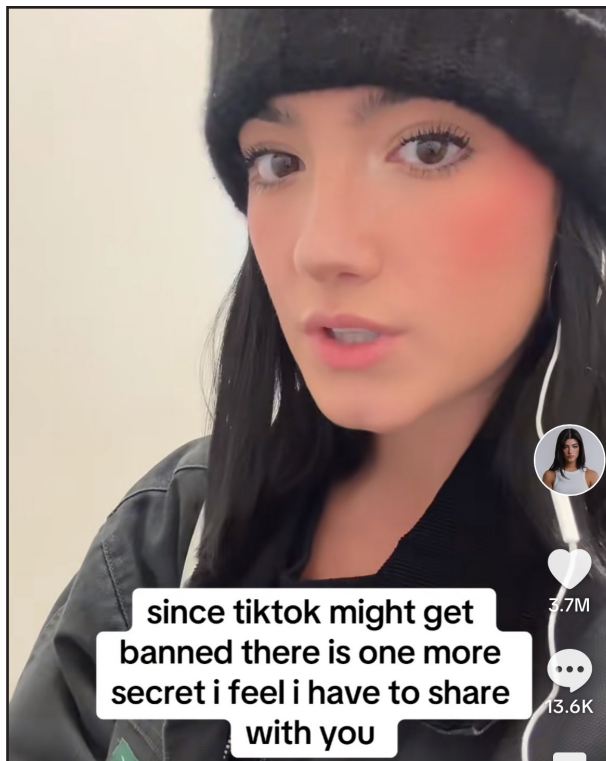
"It immediately started processing with me that it's a publicity stunt to try and make people think he's not so bad. Or, I felt they were going to give it back and it would be different and super censored. When I saw the "thank you Trump" when it was back, I honestly was super frustrated. Some people are uneducated or ignorant enough to think that he has good intentions with this. It's all for control and money really," she said.

For Connolly, she deleted the app assuming the ban would be permanent and since then the app has been deleted off the app store. When searched in the app store, a message appears stating that the app is "not available in your country or region."

So, it seems the app is banned for some and not others.

Even those who do have the app back and running say it seems different.

"I do believe the CEO of TikTok did something that made the app somewhat differ-



Famous TikTokers revealed their secrets prior to the TikTok ban, thinking the app would be gone.

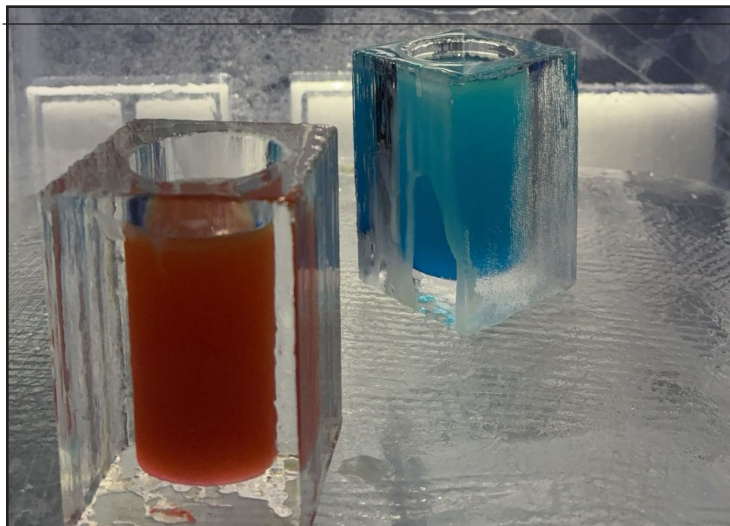
ent, like my For You page was not the same anymore and I am very nervous that they sold the app to META, which would ruin TikTok," Centeno said.

Forkin has also noticed something different about her For You page.

"I've seen less videos that

relate to politics, and some are topics or things I've never seen on my for you page before," she said.

TikTok is back for some but not all, and even though it's available it's not the same as it was before the ban. What's next for TikTok?



COURTESY CARLY CENTENEO

Colorful drinks, above left, were poured at bar made completely out of ice in Sweden. Shops and restaurants line the streets in Old Town, bottom left. Carly Centeno and her boyfriend Walter Lundstrom celebrated a snowy New Year's Eve, right.

A holiday well spent in Sweden

By Carly Centaneo
Castleton Spartan

Over winter break, I spent two weeks in Sweden with my boyfriend, fellow VTSU Castleton student Walter Lundström, and his family. I had a lot of experiences, but my favorites were getting to try new foods, going into Stockholm and spending time with his family.

My first day there was exhausting since I flew out at 5:30 p.m. and landed at 7 a.m. in Sweden. The jetlag was the worst that first day.

But after acclimating, I got to try the traditional Swedish Christmas meal, which was interesting and nothing like an American Christmas dinner. You get two separate plates, one for the cold food and one for the warm. Some of the food I had to try included pickled herring, radish with salt on it, cheese pie, and this other type of fish.

The first week I spent shop-

ping, spending all the money I could on clothes, shoes, candy and accessories. I truly believe everything is better clothes-wise in Europe, so I had no choice but to spend a ton of money on new clothes.

In my opinion, H&M and Zara are way better in Sweden than in America and have way better options to choose from. I also had to buy a new outfit to celebrate the New Year, because I had no idea how dressed up they get until my boyfriend told me what he was wearing, and I did not want to look like a messy American.

It was extremely weird not watching the New Year's Eve show that goes on in New York City, and my first time ever not seeing the ball drop at midnight. In Sweden, I was six hours ahead, so I was basically in the future when it hit midnight back home.

It was interesting hanging out with his friends. Two couldn't speak any English and I am not good with Swedish

yet, so that made from some interesting times.

At midnight they were all so excited to show me the fireworks that normally go off, but because it was snowing so much, we barely saw them, which gave me a chance to brag that Americans do fireworks shows way better.

In my second week, we spent a lot of time in Stockholm, going to different museums and basically just being a tourist with my personal tour guide. We went to Skansen, which is the zoo, to see some of the winter animals like reindeer and moose. One cool thing about the zoo is that all around are these old, historical buildings that were moved there from all over the Nordics. We also went to the Army Museum, which was interesting since my perceptions of Sweden was that it is a very peaceful country, but they were not always so peaceful from what I learned.

We also visited an ice bar.

I think it was a bit overhyped, and the Ice Hotel, which is in the North of Sweden, is probably way cooler than the bar, which is made to promote the Ice Hotel. We also went to the Avicii Museum, which was super cool getting to hear the music process and also getting to hear unreleased music by Swedish pop culture icon Tim "Avicii" Bergling.

Pinchos, which is a restaurant, was another very fun experience with my boyfriend's family. You order everything through an app and your meals are very small, which is good in case you don't like it. Not tipping waiters, however, was so weird to me because of our tipping culture in America.

The food overall was really good there were some dishes his parents made me that I questioned. Since his dad is from the North of Sweden, I just had to try some traditional dishes from the North. One dish called Palt, was a potato dumpling with pork belly in

the middle – and not my favorite meal.

I did get to try reindeer stew, which was not as bad as I thought it would be. I would eat it again.

Overall, my second trip to Sweden may have been freezing but was so much fun. Everything there is so nicely organized and clean. In my opinion, everything is just better than it is here. I loved getting to spend time with his parents and listen to them talk about their home and what fun things happened during the holiday season.

I am sad I missed the Christmas Market that is hosted in the Old Town in Stockholm, but I did get to go to the Old Town and see what everything looked like in the snow. My favorite moment was driving around hunting for the Northern lights, which I did get a sneak peek at, but it wasn't the best viewing of them. I can't wait to go back and spend more time trying new foods and spending all my money on clothes.

Its all consuming

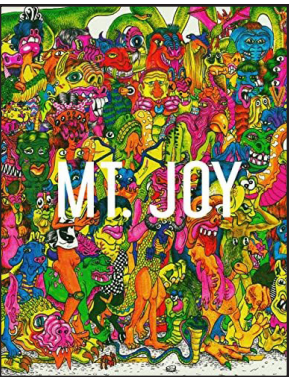
By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Hi! I'm Jess. I want to start consciously consuming media. And I want to help you do the same! I'm so sick of mindlessly scrolling on my phone, refusing to have a say on what I see and how it affects me. From now on I will be very purposeful with the books, films, articles, music, art, photography and podcasts I consume.

Turn it up LOUDER:
I've been listening to a lot of Mt. Joy these past couple of weeks.

Not to get all into it, but I was raised Catholic and of course I recognize the difference between the patriarchal control of the church and people's individual relationships with spirituality and the higher power. I like music that touches on religion in a less preachy and judgmental way and Mt. Joy does this.

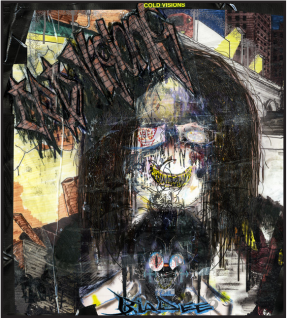
They reference God in a way that's hopeful instead of from a place of fear. I like the songs "Bathroom Light," which is track 10 off the 2022 album "Orange Blood," and "Sheep" which is track 5, and "Astrovan," which is track 8 off of their debut album "Mt. Joy."



Mt. Joy's album: Blood Orange

In a completely different direction, I've also been listening to a lot of Bladee. He's a Swedish rapper that I've been into for a couple years, but I really got into his stuff when I was in London.

His album "Cold Visions" came out in April of this year, and I remember while most of my friends were freakin' out about Taylor Swift's 30-track album, I was freaking out about Bladee's 30-track album. I'm really into track 26 "FLEXING AND FINESS-ING." The caps is so aggressive but that's literally the title I can't help it.



Bladee's album: Flexig and Finessing

Surfing the Web (Cowabunga or whatever):
Okay you guys need to check out the website Drive and Listen.

Basically, there are all these major cities you can choose from and once you click a city the screen is a p.o.v. of a car driving in whatever city you choose. You can also choose the local radio station for whatever that city is. It's very nice for background. I use it when I'm reading or writing and just want some relaxed background visuals.

I found this website in 2020 during COVID when I wanted to be anywhere but home so it was a bit of an escape. Now it's far less bleak and I just use it in the background of other activities.

I read an article published in Psyche titled "How to Get Hooked on Opera." From the website it says, "Psyche is a digital magazine from Aeon Media that illuminates the human condition through psychology, philosophy and the arts."

I thought it was an interesting "how to" and wanted to check it out. It discusses the history of opera and the traditional storytelling which I thought was interesting.

It's much different than theater that we might be familiar with. It's also not really about understanding what is being said but the emotion the songs evoke, and the visual stories being told.

It's also incredibly impressive and I know I'd start crying immediately. This website has such interesting stories about humanity and science and arts and they are all really easy to digest.

'A Complete Unknown' is worth a watch

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

I'm a huge Bob Dylan fan, but I'll admit, when I first heard about "A Complete Unknown," a Bob Dylan biopic starring Timothée Chalamet, I wasn't sure why we needed another movie about Dylan.

His story is practically a myth at this point, so what could a film about his early years add to the conversation? But as the end credits rolled, I found myself thinking, "gosh, we did need this movie."

Though I rolled my eyes when I heard that teen heart throb, Timothée Chalamet, would be portraying Dylan, I was impressed by how much the actor brought to the role. Chalamet nails young, scrappy Bob Dylan. His frizzy hair, signature slouch, and the gravelly rasp in his voice, are almost identical.

Chalamet channels the restlessness, poetic swagger and ambition Dylan possessed when he was a young artist.

The movie begins showing the New York City folk scene of the early '60s, capturing a world of smoke-filled clubs, passionate musicians and young angst. Dylan, a nobody



Timothée Chalamet channels Bob Dylan in the official movie poster for 'A Complete Unknown.'

at the time, meets Pete Seeger (Edward Norton), and through his connections to Woody Guthrie (Scoot McNairy) be-

gins his rise to stardom.

The film is heavily focused around Dylan's romantic and personal relationships, espe-

cially tension from the love triangle between Sylvie Russo (Elle Fanning) and Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro).

The way Dylan's personal life seems to constantly clash with his public persona is deafening. He's shown as one who can touch millions with his words but struggles to connect and commit to the people closest to him.

"A Complete Unknown" dives into Dylan's internal conflicts, especially around the moment he made the monumental decision to leave folk behind and go electric at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. You can feel the weight of his decision, both artistically and personally.

He wasn't just challenging folk traditions; he was challenging the expectations of those who had helped him get there. It's this tension between wanting to be true to his art and dealing with the fallout from those closest to him that makes the film grounded.

But let's talk about the music, because "A Complete Unknown" is practically a concert film in its own right.

Though Chalamet may not sound exactly like Dylan (let's be honest, no one could), his voice had the right mix of raw

edge and smoothness. You'll be a fan of the music in this film even if you're not that familiar with Dylan's work.

The performances are front and center, with over 40 songs scattered throughout the two-hour runtime.

If you're a Dylan fan, you're in for a treat.

The sequences where Chalamet and other musicians like Johnny Cash (Boyd Holbrook) and Joan Baez perform are electric. But, at times, the sheer volume of music can weigh down the narrative. It starts to feel a bit like a double album of Dylan's greatest hits stitched together with some plot. I believe it would've been better to trim some of those musical moments out to let Dylan's story breathe.

"A Complete Unknown" is more than a love letter to Dylan's music. It's about understanding the artist behind the music, his struggles, his contradictions and his inspiring pursuit of creative freedom. Though the film might drag on in certain places, it's well worth the watch, especially if you're a fan of Chalamet, Dylan, or both.

A colorful memory of childhood

By Abigale Murphy
Spartan Contributor

In my Painting 101 class, I was instructed to paint a scene (from memory) that somehow relates to a memory of childhood.

Then, I covered certain areas of the painting with masking tape to preserve it. Then, we had to paint another full layer over the top of the masking tape.

I then was instructed to paint a second layer inspired by my contemporary life from direct observation. After I removed the tape, I made the two paintings more cohesive with each other.

For my first layer, I chose to paint a memory of me using a scarf to swing down the stairs and jump into my family's laundry. I decided to use bright vibrant colors, specifically my favorite colors at that age.

I am someone who is very committed to a style or aesthetic. Even as a kid, I would surround myself with my favorite colors. I decided to make the walls and stairs pink so it would feel more like a child's imagination.

I wanted to include all of my siblings' safety items (blankets and teddy bears) on the stairs because they were always the last to be thrown

down for laundry.

The clothes pile is filled with my favorite articles of clothing as a kid.

I spend a lot of time at my desk, so I thought it would be most fitting to represent my contemporary life and paint from observation.

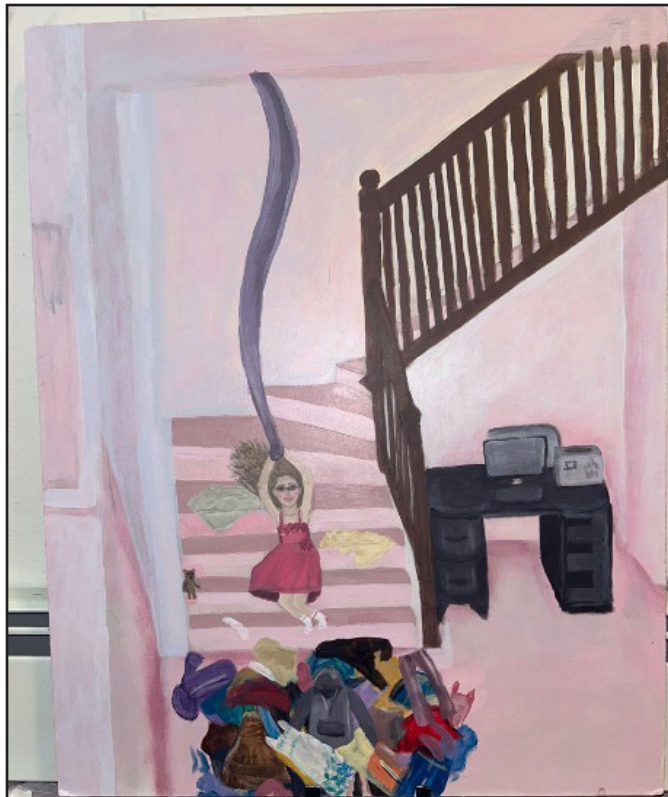
The change in color and tone between the two layers makes the painting feel like it is symbolizing remembrance in oneself.

The second layer is aesthetically pleasing to the eye, with a very mundane tone. I imagine soft vinyl playing in the background when looking at it.

The first layer is much louder than the second layer. The wall gets darker as you move away from the light which also makes it look like my childhood self is emitting the light.

The first layer represents one's past forgotten self, a girl whose style held no bounds, all she knew was she liked the color pink and would make everything pink if she could. Even after someone grows up and loses that childhood wonder that allowed swinging on a scarf to feel like flying, she still crashes through with bright colors and unrealistic imagery.

She still crashes through whenever I'm playing a game, and I pick pink for my avatar.



Viva Las Castleton: a CAB casino night



EMILY ELY

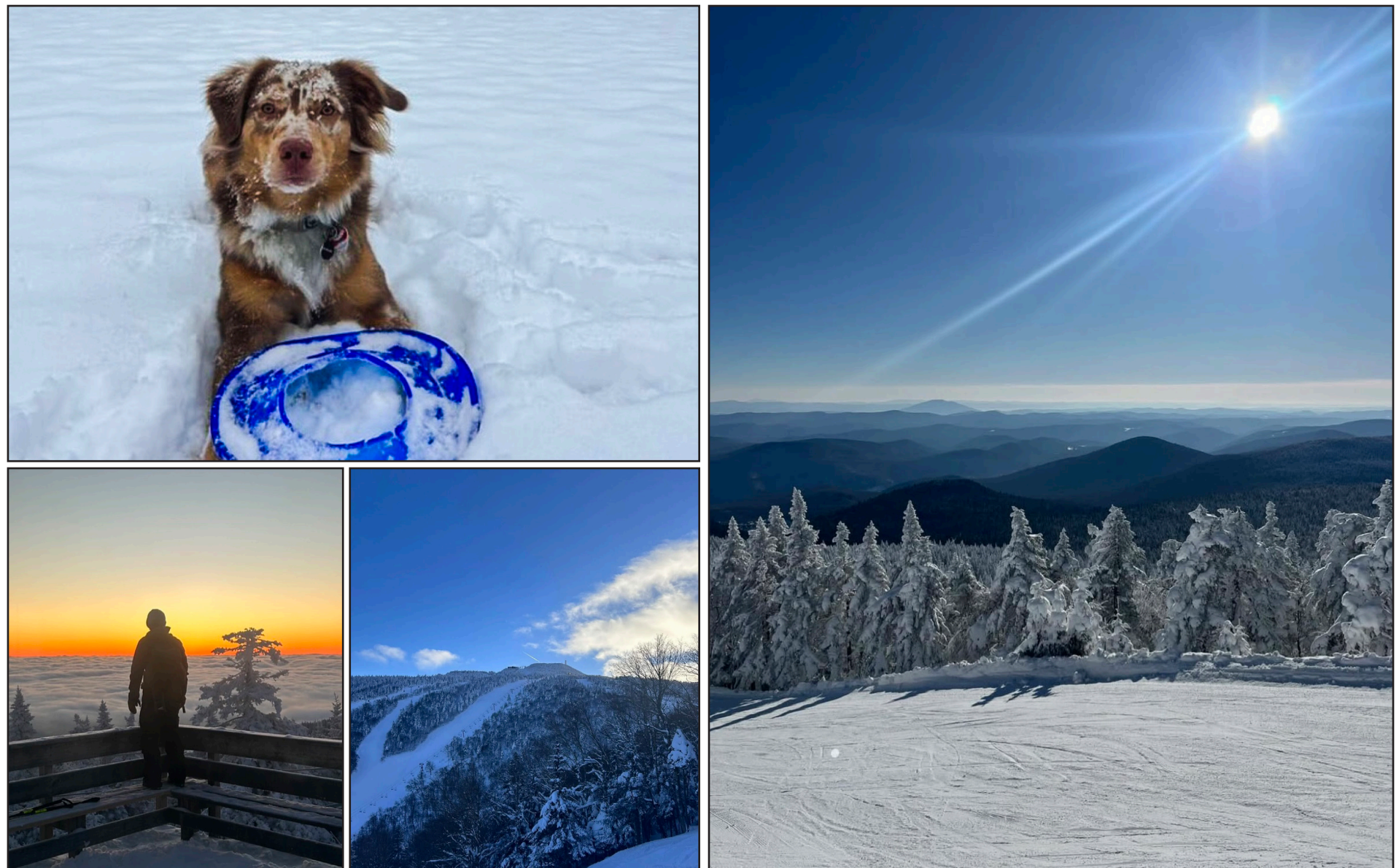
Philip Malazarte pictured dealing cards to Blackjack players, carefully discussing their strategy.



EMILY ELY

Blackjack dealer, Meghan Mureddu, collects her winnings after taking the hand of Blackjack, as players gather around for more action at Casino Night, an event organized by The Campus Activities Board.

Winter photography contest finalists



COURTESY

The winner of the 2025 Spartan winter photo competition, far right, was from Killington submitted by Kailyn August. Honorable mention submissions include Rylee Pippen, top left, Cole Dezan bottom left and Toby Ritzkowski, bottom middle.

Man was dog’s best friend

Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Animal advocates seem to be around every corner during this generation, and recently there has been an awesome example of one in the Green Mountain State.

On Jan. 10, in the small town of Berlin, Vermont, Chris MacRitchie, his wife, and his son were going through a drive-thru at a nearby Dunkin’ Donuts when MacRitchie and his wife noticed something irregular floating in the tributary of the Winooski River.

As the three gazed once more upon the icy waters, they realized what they were looking at: an animal in crisis.

A dog was left helpless, fighting against the frigid current, and time was quickly running out for the four-legged companion. Without hesitation, the family leapt out of their warm and comfortable car, urgently rushing to the bank of the tributary.

They knew immediately that something had to be done, so MacRitchie walked towards the edge of the ice.

A video was taken of the brave feat, where MacRitchie’s wife said “Just go”, and just as soon those words were said, the ice broke from underneath MacRitchie’s feet.

MacRitchie then calmly waded through the icy, waist-high water toward the struggling dog. He remarkably grabbed the dog by the collar

and began guiding her across the stream. When MacRitchie reached the riverbank, he picked her up, lifting her onto the snowy bank.

The video goes on to capture MacRitchie’s family swaddling the dog in a warm jacket before the screen cuts to black and the video ends.

In the end, the dog (named Arizona) turns out okay, and her owner was notified.

When the Boston Herald interviewed MacRitchie and asked why he acted upon the situation, MacRitchie stated, “It was like one of those moments everyone probably has in their life, like you’re going to make a decision.”

MacRitchie went on to add that he felt obligated to fetch the dog out of the river be-

cause, “I felt I was obligated to at least try to fetch this dog out of the river, as I have two dogs myself, and I would hope someone would do that for them if they were in that spot.”

According to the Boston Herald, Chris MacRitchie and his family quickly contacted Arizona’s owner, Morgan Cerasoli. Cerasoli was relieved to hear that Chris not only found Arizona but saved her from the freezing waters (especially given the fact that Arizona had been missing since the previous Thursday).

The Boston Herald interviewed Morgan, later asking her what her response was to the incredible news. All she could explain was, “I started crying, and I told him, oh, my God, I love you, I love you, I



COURTESY GAVIN BRADLEY

Chris MacRitchie with Arizona, seconds after he pulled her out of the water.

love you.”

Personally, seeing a story like this truly raises my spirits. It makes me realize that there are a lot of good people out there who will do almost any-

thing to help a creature in need.

I’m grateful for all the animal advocates out there who not only do amazing things for other people, but for other species.

Genny:



COURTESY GENNY HOLDER

Genny Holder and her best friend Rebecca Jones.

Continued from page 3

“I was partnered up with Andrew Martell and we went over to basically find actors and actresses for our film. We managed to find Emerson Joliff and Genny. And we met her down in the costume department of Castleton. We kinda talked basically and she said yes and she also got to do some of the costume stuff for our project so it was pretty pretty fun,” Burmeister said.

She killed it in both versions of the project and she was then the easy option when looking for actresses in future film projects. Since then, Burmeister and Holder have become good friends attending many social gatherings, parties, as well as Sam’s comedy specials at local bars.

In the summer and fall months, she works as an employee at the Great Escape. Based on the season, she gets

to dress up as fictional characters and perform shows for children and she loves her job.

Just this past Halloween she was in a show called “Caged,” where she had makeup on that made her look like a failed science experiment. The show was remarkable, and the dances were impressive.

Another great friend of Holder is Rebecca Jones. Ever since they were paired together in cheer tryouts they have been inseparable and have become like sisters.

“We cheered together through high school and then we were close. We were always together during cheerleading and football games, and we would dorm with each other every year for cheer camp. So, I graduated high school, and we didn’t talk for a couple of years and after COVID, she messaged me and we got together to do a craft fair and then ever since we’ve been

close,” Jones said.

“Yeah, we’re at the point now where if she just shows up at my house I don’t think anything of it. We’re both really similar and we’re both really gift giving people and we’re always picking up little things for each other and we connect on a level that’s deeper than a normal friendship,” Holder said.

Holder has been through a lot in her life and she has risen above every challenge thrown her way. She has even been considering whether to go to law school or go back and get her masters. Whatever she decides to do she’s going to take it head on and do great things as her life goes on.

“You’re not gonna find yourself sitting on the couch at home. Just go out and do things, start making decisions. Yourself will find you eventually,” Holder said.

Convocation:

Continued from page 1

Wakefield then said “adoption is important,” but then explained the importance of implementation.

He discussed his plans to follow up with the towns that have adopted the Declaration and see how far it has taken them.

“We think this has implications beyond Vermont,” Wakefield said. “States are struggling to be competitive.”

Wakefield discussed how although the moral part of the situation is important, it is also a matter of needing more than just the white people in communities to make things work.

“Folks have got to come from someplace,” he explained.

He encouraged the audience saying “You can exemplify the spirit of inclusion.”

Wakefield concluded, giving praise and encouragement to the campus and community.

VTSU President David Bergh took the stage after a heart-felt rendition of “True Light” was performed by the Chorale in remembrance of Dr. Tony Leach.

Bergh expressed pride he acknowledged that he saw all but one campus on the list of inclusion and noted that there is room for improvement.

He praised Yoon’s efforts and explained that we must “prioritize connection and conversation...even with those you don’t agree with...especially with those you don’t agree with.”



ROBERT FRANKLIN AND LEO RICHARDSON

The Castleton Collegiate Chorale performed at Convocation and DEI leader Paul Yoon spoke.

Playoff push time for women’s basketball

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Over the course of the Spartans women’s basketball season, the team has set itself up to make a strong push for a playoff spot in the final weeks of the season.

Currently sitting at a 7-12 overall record with a 4-7 conference record, the Spartans have been solid at home but have found trouble on the road throughout the season. Of the five remaining games of the regular season, the Spartans are at home twice, which seems like an advantage for the team currently.

“The second half of the season we’ve been seeing things fall more into place.

We’ve gotten a couple conference wins. Now we’re just doing what we can to make playoffs and try and keep our season going as long as we can,” said junior captain, Maggie McKearin.

The Spartans, while tied with Keene State, are on the outside of the playoffs because of the tie breaker between the two teams. In the five upcoming games, the Spartans have already played each opponent once and have fared well against two of them. Plymouth State and UMass Boston were both key wins.

If the Spartans take the second game against UMass Boston on Feb. 19, it could put the team in a prime position to have a playoff birth after just nearly missing out on the

playoffs a season ago.

The team is currently led by Stasia Epler, averaging just over 14 points a game while Emily Dingmon and Emily Adams are right behind her with both averaging 12.7 and 12.6 points per game respectively. Dingmon is also managing to grab 10 boards a game to average a double-double on the season currently while having a 32 percent field goal shooting.

While the team relies heavily on their trio of scorers for offense, it is a much different look offensively than the team has seen in years prior. The team looks more to attack the paint this year than previous years where it was a more balanced drive and kick out for the three-ball offense.



CASTLETONSPORTS
Stasia Epler shooting a mid range jumper against UMass Boston.

Women’s hockey finds their stride

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The Spartans women’s hockey team has been back in action plenty since the break. There is lots to catch you up on with the girls. On Jan. 3 the women began their hot streak in their Badgley Invitational with a commanding 7-1 victory over Keene State. The Spartans’ powerplay units were particularly effective, matching a school record scoring five powerplay goals in a single game. Standout performances included three-point contributions from Ellie Schliebener, Alex Johnson, and Codi Bacon, while goaltender Victoria Bakopanos secured the win with 24 saves.

Following this dominant performance, the Spartans faced a formidable opponent in No. 14 Colby College during the tournament’s championship game. Despite a valiant effort, Castleton fell 5-0. Bakopanos delivered an impressive performance with 55 saves, marking her third game of the season with over 50 saves. Both she and Johnson were named to the All-Tournament team, with Johnson having contributed two goals and an assist in the tournament. Colby has now won the tournament back-to-back years and will need to be dethroned.

The team then returned to conference play, facing Norwich University twice on the road. The Spartans were unable to overcome a strong Norwich team, resulting in 4-0 and 2-0 losses, respectively. That made it three straight games without a goal.

The following weekend, Castleton traveled to Newport,

Rhode Island, to take on Salve Regina University. The game concluded with a 4-1 loss for the Spartans. Ellie Schliebener broke the scoring draught with the team’s lone goal, assisted by Mikayla Brightman and Moa Carlsson. First-year goaltender Gianna McCusker made a notable contribution with a career-high 31 saves. Still struggling for offense, however, it was not enough.

The Spartans rebounded the following day, securing a 2-0 victory over Salve Regina. This was a big win, after a long struggle to find offense and limit the opponents chances.

Geneva, New York, was the next stop to play another conference opponent, William Smith. Both games were low-scoring defensive battles that went to overtime. On Saturday, the Spartans led 1-0 for almost the whole 60 minutes and were scored on with just seconds left on the clock, then beaten in overtime. The following night was 0-0 the entire 60 minutes, and again unfortunately were scored on in the final minutes.

The Spartans then faced off against Keene State for the second time this year and again handled them. Mikayla Brightman, Brooke Noble, and Ellie Schliebener had the three goals for Castleton to ensure a win.

And lastly, this past weekend the girls faced off with Salem State twice and came out with six points. The first game was a 3-1 victory in which Salem scored first despite being massively out shot. Finally, Carlsson broke through, followed by Meg Aiken, and then Carlsson again with the insurance marker. The following match was a similar dominant performance



CASTLETONSPORTS
On top, junior standout Moa Carlsson racing to a loose puck in the corner, on the bottom the team is celebrating the game winning goal against Salem State.

that was a little closer than it needed to be. Again, Aiken scored, Carlsson had another pair of goals, and Alex Johnson had the forth to put the game

away. The Castleton Spartans hold an overall record of 9-11-1, with a conference record of 5-8-1. The team continues to

demonstrate determination and skill as they navigate the challenges of the season. Next time we check in, they will be entering the playoffs,

so support the girls in their playoff push upcoming.

Spartans ski into medal finishes at West Mountain



CHRISTOPHER EDER

The Spartan ski team continued its dominance on the slopes at West Mountain on Feb. 8 and 9. The men’s side took third on Friday and second on Saturday as the women took first on Friday and thrid on Saturday. This marks the second time this season both teams medaled on both days. On Saturday, it would mark the women’s lowest finish of the season and only the second time they hadn’t placed first for a day this season.

Men’s basketball trying to find their footing



CASTLETONSPORTS

Troy Butler drives toward the hoop through two defenders.

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Through a season that has had its ups and downs the Castleton men’s basketball team continues to look to build off each other to try and find success.

“The second half of the season has brought some challenges, but as a program, we feel good in the direction we’re headed. We’ve changed our play style to a more upbeat, faster style of play where everyone sees the floor and gives it all they have for about 1-2 minutes at a time. We’ve seen some success and hope to keep building on that,” said assistant coach Joe Russell.

The Spartans struggled in the first half of the season finding consistent scoring however, with the new addition of Troy Butler on the court the

team has seemed to find its offensive spark.

“I was out of basketball for 2 years and I give thanks to coach Culpo who gave me a opportunity to come back and do what I love. We have caught a couple wins in the midst of adjusting to a new system that all the guys are completely new to,” Butler said.

Butler has been a key contributor averaging 16 points a game while shooting over 30 percent from the field. Butlers’ emergence alongside Will Radcliff and Ben Seller has been the tail of the tape of the Spartans offence during the second half stretch of the season.

“The new system gives us a chance to have fun while playing and trust each other to have the backs of your teammates while on the court because of the relentless

mindset Coach Culpo, Gibbons, and Russell instilled into us. It’s a honor to share the court with the talented core we have and we’re very confident in pushing through this last stretch of the second half to secure a playoff spot,” Butler said.

The Spartans look at an uphill battle the rest of the season currently sitting on the outside looking in at a playoff spot. With five conference games remaining the Spartans are two games back of the sixth-place spot in the standings which is the cut off for playoffs.

The Spartans look to get on the right track towards playoff on the road at UMass Dartmouth on Saturday February 8.

Seniors soak it all in at Spartan Arena

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

This January, the Vermont Men’s Hockey team faced a critical turning point, knowing they were eager to turn things around.

With three new teams and six games played in the new year, they unfortunately came up short in each one. While one game ended in a tie, they ultimately lost in a heartbreaking shootout.

With playoffs right around the corner we don’t know if the Spartans grasped onto a spot or not, but we are eager to see if they can finish the season off strong.

Friday Jan. 31, The Vermont State University men’s hockey team earned a crucial 3-1 victory over New England College on Friday evening, continuing their push in the New England Hockey Conference.

The win, which took place during the “Breaking the Ice on Mental Health” event, propelled the Spartans to a 2-12-1 record in the conference, while the Pilgrims slipped to 5-7-1.

Castleton got off to a strong start as Aiden Robson delivered a precision shot from the blue line, firing top corner after receiving a perfect pass from Zach Papapetros.

The goal, Aiden Robson’s third of the season, gave the Spartans an early 1-0 lead. In net, freshman Charles Watson was stellar for Castleton, particularly in the second period where he stopped 15 shots.

The Yarmouth, Maine native finished with 34 saves on the night, earning his first collegiate victory in impressive fashion.

The Spartans doubled their lead in the second when Andrew Stefura won a battle behind the NEC net, finding Jackson Edwards, who quickly fed a pass to Josef Vyvial for a one-timer that beat Pilgrims’ goalie.

The score stood at 2-0 heading into the final period. NEC came out strong in the third, capitalizing on an early powerplay, cutting the

Castleton led to 2-1 and giving the Pilgrims life.

However, the Spartans’ defense, anchored by Cedrick Theodore and Cam Reid, stood tall, snuffing out every NEC offensive surge.

As time wound down, the Pilgrims had a final opportunity with a powerplay chance at 1:47 left in the game, but Castleton’s penalty kill was up to the task. Trevor Castino made a key interception and sprinted the length of the ice to bury an empty-net goal, securing the win for the Spartans.

The victory marks a significant step forward for Castleton as they continue to battle through the rest of the season to try and end strong.

They were looking for another win against the team the next day to keep the momentum going especially on senior night.

After a hard-fought 3-1 win against New England College on Friday, January 31, the Spartans were looking to build on the momentum heading into Senior Night the following day.

However New England College bounced back on Saturday with a commanding 6-2 victory, spoiling Castleton’s chance at a weekend sweep.

NEC came out of the gate with high intensity, taking control early. Putting them ahead 1-0.

NEC continued their offensive onslaught, netting three more goals to build a commanding 4-0 lead by the end of the first period.

The Pilgrims didn’t waste time adding to their lead in the second, as Gunnar Sibley found the back of the net just 45 seconds into the period to make it 5-0.

Castleton made a goaltender change in the second period, bringing in senior Simon Brenter, who provided a steady presence between the net.

Brenter finished with 21 saves, keeping the Spartans’ comeback hopes alive.

Meanwhile, Zach Trempner was strong on the faceoff dot, winning 13 of 16 draws for the Spartans.

The Spartans refused to be discouraged by the deficit and



CASTLETONSPORTS

The senior Spartans after their senior night post game activies with family and friends.

began to rally in the second period.

Logan Dapprich and Cam Reid teamed up to assist Balint Mesterhazy, who scored his first goal of the season to put Castleton on the board. Early in the third, the Spartans kept the pressure on.

Josef Vyvial set up Andrew Stefura for a goal that brought Castleton within two. With that tally, Stefura became just the sixth player in program history to score 40 goals.

However, despite the momentum shift, NEC answered back with a powerplay goal with just under seven minutes remaining to seal the 6-2 victory and split the weekend series with the Spartans.

Castleton will look to regroup and rebound as they play University of Maine next weekend.

As the Spartans continue to battle through the season’s final stretch, Senior Day brought a

moment of reflection.

We caught up with several seniors from the Castleton hockey program to hear how the past few years have shaped them, both on and off the ice.

Captain Justin Stairs shared, “The last five years have given me some great memories and great friends. I think we were able to leave the program better than we found it, and they’re in good hands moving forward with the group they have.”

Zach Papapetros echoed the sentiment, saying, “The program has meant a ton to me because of the friends I made and the memories we created together.”

Zach Trempner added, “It’s been an incredible honor to wear the Spartan jersey for the past four seasons. I’ll always cherish the memories made and the teammates I had the privilege to share the ice with.”

For Stone Stelzl, the experience was about more than just hockey: “It has been great; it means a lot to each of us. We all came from different spots but became brothers throughout our time here and made lots of memories on and off the ice that we will remember forever.”

Jackson Kobelka reflected on the opportunity the program provided, saying, “It has meant everything to me. It has given me the opportunity to continue playing the game I love while also getting an education.”

Romeo Torain, a four-year player, described his experience as “an honor and a privilege” and shared, “To be able to wear the Spartan uniform every day was something I’ll never take for granted.”

Bryce Irwin, though his time didn’t end as he had envisioned, expressed gratitude for his journey, saying, “The past four years gave me the opportunity to create friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. I will always be grateful for my teammates,

coaches, and fans who treated me like family through my years at Castleton.”

Goaltender Simon Brenter said “The hockey program means a lot to me, I especially value all the friendships and memories I made over the four years.”

Finally, Stu added, “It has been an honor to play for Castleton over the past four seasons. I’ve been blessed to have an incredible group of teammates who have become lifelong friends, and I’d like to thank all my coaches, teammates, and fans who have supported me throughout the years.”

As these seniors take their final strides in the Spartan uniform, their words reflect the deep bond they’ve formed not only with each other but with the program, and the lasting impact it has had on them both on and off the ice.

Scary Super Bowl Sunday matchup

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The 2025 Super Bowl will be full of compelling storylines both on and off the field. Whether it’s the Chiefs quest to become the first NFL team to ever win three consecutive championships, Saquon’s revenge season after being let go from the Giants, complaints about officiating, or Tom Brady being in the booth as the game’s announcer.

Regardless, America’s most decorated game will provide the excitement and engagement we as an audience will be looking for.

The Chiefs quest for a three-peat not only cements the Chiefs organization into the history books with a win, it also adds legacy stock to both players and coaches.

Patrick Mahomes would have the second most Super Bowl wins. Mahomes would also become the first quarterback to have four SuperBowl wins before the age of 30.

Travis Kelce would also add to his illustrious career as

a fabulous playoff performer. Kelce is the all-time receptions leader in the playoffs and trails only Jerry Rice in both receiving yards and receiving touchdowns in the playoffs. Kelce would further push his case for being the greatest tight end of all time.

Head coach Andy Reid has big stakes on the line in this year’s Super Bowl too. Reid would become one of only three coaches in NFL history to win four or more Super Bowls. Not to mention that Reid is only four wins behind Belichick for the most playoff wins in NFL history.

Saquon Barkley has been unbelievable this season after being let go from the misery in New York. Barkley went over 2,000 yards rushing in the regular season and has continued his brilliance in the postseason. Barkley this postseason has gone over 100 yards rushing twice and over 200 yards in the Eagles most recent game.

Barkley will look to complete his revenge tour with a win on Super Bowl Sunday and record one of the greatest running back seasons this

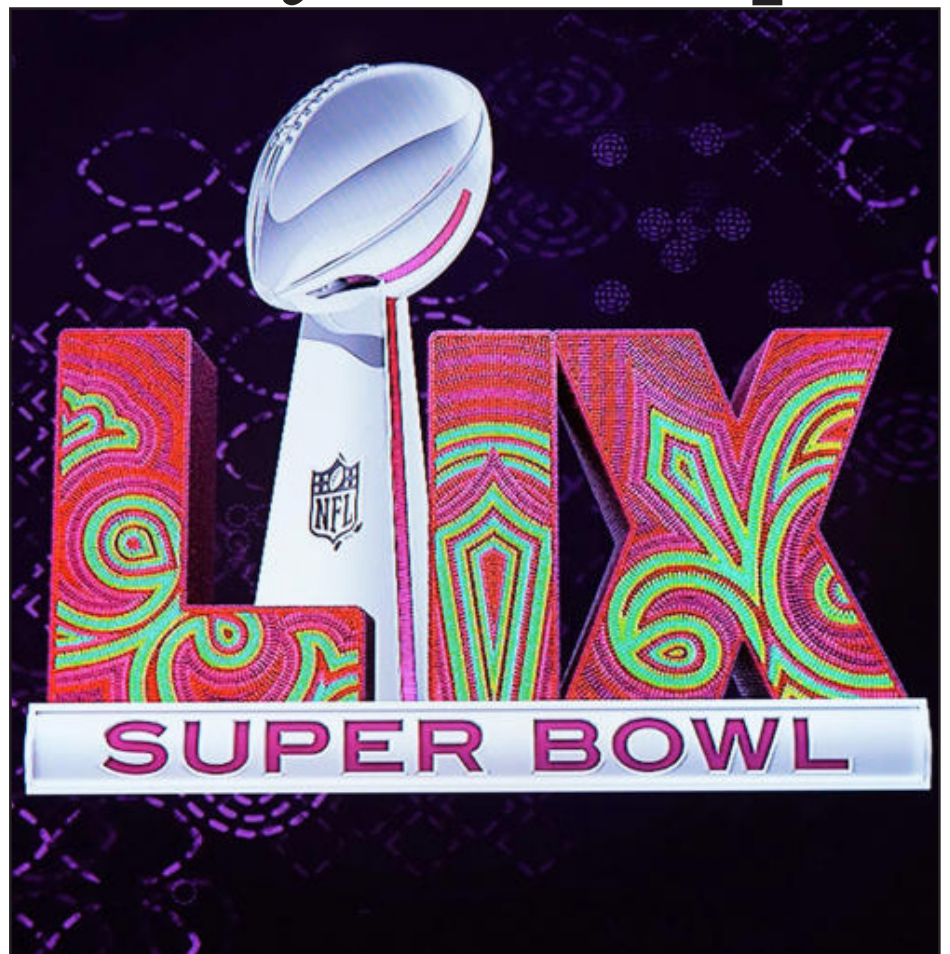
league has ever seen.

Because of the Chiefs dominance over the past couple seasons, it’s become harder and harder to watch a game without having to hear about the officiating. Other than Chief fans, most of the NFL fans believe the Chiefs get favorable calls. And because this narrative has continued to grow, it’ll likely be the hot topic of conversation during this year’s Super Bowl.

Although we’re used to hearing Tom Brady’s name on Super Bowl Sunday, this time it’ll be from the broadcasting booth. No player appeared in more Super Bowl games than Brady. We all know Brady doesn’t shy away from high-leverage moments, but it’ll be intriguing to see how he handles the pressure of calling the biggest game of the year.

This year’s Super Bowl is heating up to be a highly touted game with the two best teams playing. The Kansas City Chiefs have the ultimate quarterback-coach combo while the Philadelphia Eagles have arguably the most complete roster in the NFL.

This clash is shaping up to





NEWS

New Res-Life hall director is bonding with VTSU Castleton students.

PAGE 3



NEWS

VTSU Castleton students change lives at Boys and Girls Club in Rutland.

PAGE 4



SPORTS

Emilie Stene is making history in alpine skiing.

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Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, February 21, 2025

The world is waiting

Why traveling during your college years is essential

Aspen Wood
Spartan Contributor

Self-discovery is a major part of the human experience. Arguably, the vast majority of these revelations happen in your 20s. It is a period of growth, building relationships, and exploring identity.

Throughout history, young adults have sought this fulfillment through seeing the world. While academics lay the foundation for knowledge, travel provides an education that no classroom can replicate.

VTSU Castleton student Emma Ezzo is back on campus from her most recent travels to South Africa, where she spent her time engaging with wildlife and immersing herself in Nelson Mandela’s experience on Robben Island. Ezzo exudes warmth and a keen sense of adventure as she speaks.

“I always knew I wanted to see the world ... So, I just did it,” she said.

Ezzo has certainly taken advantage of opportunities for unique ventures. She emphasized her value for experience over materialism. One of the rings adorning her fingers holds memories from Florence, Italy – a rare souvenir purchase. She stresses that a key part of budgeting while traveling is to prioritize funding toward “hostels and accommodation and then build around that.”

While trinkets and postcards may be lost or forgotten, experiences that build character stand the test of time.

Clearly, Ezzo’s well-rounded demeanor can partially be credited to her travels, or more specifically, the people she has met. Ezzo met an impactful woman named Rosalie while on a kayaking adventure in South America. She was an art teacher specializing in individuals with disabilities.

“I really admired her calmness...I saw how she held herself and I really learned from that,” said Ezzo.

Meeting new people is a big motivation for Ezzo’s adventures. In more recent travel, someone she crossed paths



COURTESY EMMA EZZO

Emma Ezzo posing with elephants during her travels to Robben Island, South Africa.

with shared their admiration for Ezzo’s own sense of calm.

“It felt like a full circle moment,” she said.

Jessica Emery is a fellow student who spent a semester in London and traversed through Europe. It was during her time there that Emery made strong connections.

“It was life changing. There’s not a day that goes by where I don’t think about the time I was away and the friends that I made,” she said.

Emery’s creativity shines through her, and her essence is elevated when talking about her passions and friends.

“They really shifted my perspective on a lot of things,”

Emery said.

She credits obtaining a broader viewpoint of beauty that give her a newfound sense of confidence. Her time spent in art museums, cafés and beaches allowed for reflection and perspective.

“I’m someone who really values art, but things are also so much more than what they

look like,” said Emery, referring to her value of inward beauty. “The lack of judgment was eye-opening.”

Emery felt welcomed throughout her travels, especially in Amsterdam and the coast of France. It was on these trips that she was joined by fellow student VTSU Castleton student Reilly Tennis, who

spent a semester abroad in Northern Ireland.

“I never would’ve imagined I’d have seven-plus countries visited under my belt at only 21 years old,” Tennis said.

See ‘Travels’ on page 6

Castleton hit by car thefts

Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

A recent increase in car break-ins and car thefts has left Castleton University students and locals alarmed.

Several vehicles in Castleton and nearby towns have been rifled through, tampered with and even stolen in recent weeks.

Castleton Police say while most of the stolen cars have been recovered, at least one is still missing, and the suspects have yet to be identified.

A worrisome pattern seems to be occurring. The offenders appear to target unlocked vehicles in search of valuables or car keys left inside.

However, oddly enough, not many things have been taken.

Police Chief Peter Mantello says some stolen cars have been taken for joyrides and then abandoned in surrounding parking lots. Others have been searched, but remarkably few items have been stolen.

Stone Stelzl, a Castleton senior, was one of the many

whose car was targeted.

“Nothing was stolen from my car, not even the change in my center console, but everything was all over the place on my front seat,” he said. “They could’ve stolen some stuff, but nothing of huge value.”

While Stelzl was lucky to have lost nothing, the circumstances of the incident make him wonder why this is happening in a small college town.

“I think they are just looking for keys in cars to steal the cars from the looks of it, considering nothing was taken from my car,” he said. “I think it’s pretty messed up, though. Especially in a small college town where this is happening. I’m just thankful nothing was taken from my car, but others might not have had the same luck.”

CJ Childs, another Castleton student, has had an even more painful experience.

His car was flat-out stolen. “My car was stolen roughly a week and a half ago. When I woke up to find it missing, I was pretty mad, to say the least,” he said. “I contacted the police, and it still has not been

found, which is weird because my car is the only one that hasn’t been recovered since the break-ins started happening.”

Childs stated that his roommates’ cars had been rifled through, but the thieves stole nothing—even when there were expensive items and valuables that could’ve been taken.

“All of my roommates’ cars that were unlocked were searched through, but oddly enough, nothing was stolen, even though there was a wallet and a \$100 watch in one of their cars.”

Mantello verified that at least nine cars were taken in three weeks, but the problem is not confined to Castleton.

“What these people are doing is they would go through cars, checking handles, and if there were keys inside, they’d take the car, drive it to another town, and swap it for another one.”

Mantello noted that all stolen vehicles except Childs had been recovered. Police believe there are numerous suspects, including at least two juveniles. Authorities are waiting for DNA test results from



MADDIE LINDGREN

Castleton Police are looking for leads about a rash of car thefts in town.

evidence found in some of the stolen cars that were not there before. Mantello emphasized that obtaining usable DNA from a car is difficult unless the offender leaves something behind, such as a cigarette or

coffee cup.

The unpredictability of what was taken, and not taken, has many victims and students confused. Some students’ vehicles glove compartments and armrests were searched

and items were taken like cash and some technology, but others had valuable stuff left unharmed despite their exposure.

See ‘Car thefts’ on page 6

Be conscious of your consumption

I've been reflecting on the media we consume and the role the "algorithm" plays in shaping it. With AI curating content based on our interactions—what we scroll through, like, and watch—do we truly control what we consume anymore?

Bias and personal taste have always influenced media consumption; people naturally gravitate toward content that aligns with their existing preferences. You're more likely to enjoy a film if it's similar to something you already love.

But for those of us who are passionate about culture and learning, isn't there something uniquely thrilling about discovering something entirely new—something unexpected that immediately resonates and becomes a favorite? A form of falling in love.

There is this idea floating around on the internet about how we've curated our social media feeds. This brings to the front the idea that we are active participants in the process, though I feel that this takes an understanding of the way the platform tracks you. Algorithms are designed to optimize engagement, which often means keeping us in familiar loops, reinforcing preferences rather than challenging them. This is the tension between curation and control.

Challenging the ways we think is what brings nuance and understanding to our perspectives. This constant loop of curated media for you by the app kills curiosity. You no longer must curate your own consumption. You are being fed a bowl of fruit and they know you like strawberries and bananas. What if you want pineapple tomorrow? If you no longer make your own bowl, you lose that choice.

I often have wondered what life was like before the internet. As a Gen Z born in the first year of the 21st Century, I have had access to social media since the 6th grade. What did people do with that all that empty time? They couldn't just scroll it away!

Nowadays it feels like nobody is left with their thoughts. Instead, we fill every moment with something else. Doing Laundry? Toss a show on. Doing dishes? Listen to some music. Sitting on the couch watching tv? Scroll Instagram. Walking to your car from class? Scroll Instagram again. Never be alone with yourself, you might realize something.

I imagine I would have been much more creative with my time if I didn't have 24-hour access to every piece of information ever accumulated by man. And it's an oxymoron in and of itself because the possibilities are endless with the internet to be creative with your time.

But, it seems to paralyze us, not knowing where to look so we look where we are told to. Too many choices, make my choices for me.

Reading was originally how we consumed information. Now we don't read more than a caption. I have been thinking of Orwell lately because I believe his "1984" is incredibly apropos currently. I re-read "Fahrenheit 451" for a class last year and it sent shivers down my spine at how accurate it was. There is a vast amount of information in literature, but more than that is the way reading forms but not only informs your opinions. In reading you are an active participant.

Recently, I read an article about the decline of literary engagement among men, particularly in fiction. In 2024, nearly 80% of bestsellers are written by women, and 70% of fiction readers are women. Publishers are reportedly less interested in books by white male authors simply because they aren't selling. The article suggested this shift might be contributing to a broader cultural and intellectual decline among young men.

Now we're getting information and content that prioritizes ideology over critical thought. Reading won't even allow you the ideology without critical thought. So, instead of reading Orwell, Fitzgerald, or Hunter S. Thompson—writers who shaped generations—they're consuming business biographies about Musk and self-help manuals about how to make friends.

While there's space for all kinds of literature, the loss of fiction, history, and philosophical engagement could explain the growing lack of individuality, depth, and nuance in public discourse. Maybe it's time to step away from the algorithm and return to the kinds of stories that force us to think. It is a cultural shift you can see everywhere.

It's not that we've lost control entirely, but the effort to break out of the loop has become more intentional. The default setting is passive consumption, and breaking free requires curiosity and sometimes even resistance. But especially curiosity. Cultivate it. It will change your life. What is in those pages? Where did this idea come from? Where did this get sampled from? The tension between curation and control.

Be conscious of your consumption, and explore the various mediums through which we consume media. Explore art more. Read fiction, get a political reference from a song, fall in love through a movie.

- Jackson Edwards



JOE VYVIAL

What is a fascist anyway?

Recently, I've noticed an increasing number of discussions about fascism in the media, and I realize that writing about it myself only adds to that conversation. However, who's to say the term itself is inherently negative?

It can suggest something harmful, but that interpretation is entirely subjective based on one's own perspective. A fascist might label an opposing party with the same term because, at the end of the day, they are essentially the same.

A leader may manipulate the masses to incite radical change, but the people attempting to overthrow that corrupt entity could also be labeled with the same term. It is a slippery slope, and people often find themselves caught at the bottom of a rockslide, trying to fight radical change, with their own radical change.

Like any word, fascism has multiple meanings. It has been shaped and manipulated over the years, but why? The term fascism originates from Italy. Fascismo derives from fascio, which means a bundle of sticks. A bundle of sticks is much harder to break than a single stick standing alone.

Fascism promises a new, united nation in control of its destiny, bound by blood. National greatness is the heart that sustains fascism. It seeks to cultivate a new culture and nation capable of achieving greatness.

Doesn't that sound appealing?

A proud country unafraid to evolve its ideals?

Once again, it's subjective. However, Donald J. Trump has been shouting out these ideas from the rooftops. He seeks radical change. He is enlisting wealthy, influential people to dismantle our government to begin anew, and he will shift the blame onto them once the pressure mounts.

There has been a tidal wave of uncertainty in America, and if you look toward the horizon, you might catch a faint glimpse of hope shooting out from a lighthouse. That lighthouse symbolizes the courage and strength of the people speaking out against the MAGA team's unjust actions.

On Feb. 11, a news conference was held at the White House. "President" Elon Musk and his sidekick Trump addressed the press. Let me rephrase that: Elon spoke to the press while Trump sat idly by.



GABRIEL STICKNEY

Elon stood awkwardly to the left of the Oval Office desk, sweating profusely, while Trump sat in his chair, trying to look good for the cameras.

Elon Musk alleged, without evidence, that certain officials at the now-dismantled International Development office were taking "kickbacks." He stated that "quite a few people" within the bureaucracy had somehow "managed to accumulate tens of millions of dollars in net worth while in those positions," yet he did not clarify the basis for these claims.

Later in the conference, he noted that some Social Security recipients were as old as 150. Common sense says otherwise. Common sense would also say that Elon Musk has accumulated billions of dollars in net worth while destroying our government in the process.

"We are actually trying to be as transparent as possible," he said, referring to the posts made by his team on his own social media platform, X. "So, all of our actions are maximally transparent." "I don't know of a case where an organization has been more transparent than the DOGE organization."

Elon Musk discussed "transparency" in his actions, while Trump avoided eye contact with Musk's son X, who regularly disrupted the conference. However, that statement is only true because we can see it right through him. His actions are opaque. He is "transparent." His words are purely Picasso. He throws whatever he can at a wall to see if it will stick. America's pasta may be al dente, but one day the wall the pasta is strung upon will collapse.

When it does, the people of our country will be more willing to call Donald J. Trump and his lackeys fascists and stop future leaders from abusing our fragile system.

- Gabriel Stickney

Human being? Or human doing?

People change. We will always change, whether we resist or ignore. This can be hard for those who cling to the past—you no longer identify with. People will call you angry when you're calm because you used to be hard to sit with.

Or they'll call you impatient, even though you've learned to wait. Growing means moving away from people of the past.

They say the straightest path is the quickest, but have you ever gone into a house without looking in any of the rooms? Aren't you curious? Isn't it interesting?

Moving around and experimenting is so important because then you find out about the world.

Growing up is realizing no one really knows what they're doing. Adults never held some sort of secret knowledge of how to exist. Everyone is just making it up as they go along.

Even though people are making it up, they like to tell you they've learned something. But maybe the trick is to stop learning and start sitting. People are so confused, so afraid, so messy. We sometimes forget to just sit with it.

Society hates the contempt of stillness. It means you've accepted a world you can make better. So, we make goals, but right before we've achieved them, we move the goalposts further, pushing ourselves further and further from that contempt, so we don't even see ourselves growing. The problem is that growth without contempt is a fool's victory.

People like to give you life advice as they watch you grow up, but I come from a belief that advice is a better reflection of the person giving it than the one taking it. I believe you can only truly give advice to your past self, but we can't do that, so we tell the next best person, finding similarities or clinging to our averageness to the people who listen.

There will always be people who feel like they stick to the edges of the bowl, onlooking an unlivable normalcy in a crossroads of pleasing others or doing their own thing. And terrified either way. Here's my two cents: I believe people should be weird. People should do weird things and find themselves in weird scenarios. We should find some sort of solace in our differences. Because being different isn't wrong; it makes us interesting. To understand someone, but not be them at all is completely fascinating.

But, how can we understand someone who tells us all the wrong things? How can we listen, but still learn for ourselves?

People will tell you to go to college, get a job that makes you a lot of money, or to learn certain life skills. This can be helpful. But all I hear is that as we grow up, we have to become someone. We have to achieve. That even though we keep shedding skin and regenerating this body, we should ignore the soul we've always been. We're expected to. We're needed for. We're opinionless about. What they don't tell you is that this creature that has been buried deep within your chest will outlive all that. It has a much older hunger: passion.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" they ask you.

I have learned that the answer has nothing to do with earning medals in the Olympics or becoming a firefighter. No. I want to be strong. I want to be curious. I want to remember. Sometimes we surprise ourselves and we're the core we never thought we'd be.

- Holly Lamson

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Can we be decent on Yik Yak, please?

I first found out about the app Yik Yak when I was in high school. It never stuck around and ended up just fading away.

I was surprised to see the app resurface this past fall and was shocked by some of the things written there.

For those who may not know or fully understand what Yik Yak is, it is a mobile app where you can post anonymously. Posts can only be seen within a 5-mile radius from the original post. After being posted, your "herd," the viewers within that radius, can upvote or downvote and comment.

A typical day on Yik Yak usually consists of students asking what is being served in Huden, asking fellow students who live in the residence halls to be quiet, or when and where a party is being thrown.

Nothing out of the ordinary.

A couple of weeks ago, someone in the Castleton area posted on Yik Yak that Max the Cat was hit by a car – when he wasn't.

This post caused panic on campus for students and especially for Max's owner.

This behavior is disgusting, unnecessary and extremely harmful.

I know nobody would want to find out any news like that from an anonymous post on an app, so why post that?

Yik Yak does not do much about posts like these either.

According to their 'community gaurdrails', they write, "Yik Yak is where communities are free to be authentic, equal and empowered to connect with people nearby," and continue to say that users are responsible for the consequences that their posts may

cause.

Their 'gaurdrails' also say, "If you see a yak that doesn't vibe with the Community Guardrails, please immediately downvote and report it. Yaks that reach -5 total vote points are removed from Yik Yak..."

Through the upvote/downvote system, we rely on our community to help make Yik Yak a constructive venue for free and productive speech."

This system gives users most of the control over what stays on the app's feed.

This means that if the community doesn't see a problem with a post, it can stay on there for days.

Some of my friends have gone so far as to delete the app to get away from the negativity.

But Yik Yak isn't always bad.

There are always reminders about school events, deadlines for Soundings, and even messages of support.

I have also seen posts about people expressing how depressed they are or how the pressure of school is getting to them. The comments will fill offering support or resources they can look to.

This is nice to see because it isn't easy asking for help, and anonymity may make it more comfortable.

As this app grows on campus, I hope those who use it think about how their post could affect someone. I'm not asking a lot, just be a decent human being.

- Carly Centeno

Old Village School is alive with pickleball

Ethan Haggerty
Spartan Contributor

The second you walk in the doors of the Castleton Recreation Center, you will be embraced by contagious laughter, the cracking sounds of pickleball rackets colliding with the ball, and some competitive and playful hooting and hollering that comes with competition.

Bob and Mary McIntyre created the pickleball program three years ago. Bob highlighted the strong sense of community building, and the ability for people to get exercise in a more exhilarating way.

"It's not just community members," said McIntyre, revealing there are some out-of-town competitors. "There are probably four or eight of us that go out after playing."

They often support local businesses like the Castleton Deli and Birdseye diner, he said.

"I played all three sports in high school," said Rob Mur-

phy wearing a knee brace, sweating from the intense past games. Despite being much older than the high school days, he said he never lost the edge that competition brings, which is shown in his vocal and entertaining tone during games.

Murphy now delivers propane for the Fyles Brothers, located in Orwell, Vermont, but was a firefighter for the Navy in the past. He related the immense comradery in the Navy to the tight sense of community in the rec center.

Other players agree.

"I find the community the best," said Marj Kyhil, a part-time employee at VTSU-Castleton Wellness Center who also discussed the comradery pickleball at the Castleton Recreation Center provides.

"It's fun, and very respectful of what your needs are," Kyhil stated with a grin forming on her face, hinting towards the diverse age range and experience level the Castleton Recre-

ation boasts.

The courts see a range of 30- to mid-70-year-olds, while also sprinkling in a couple 20-year-olds that will sometimes show up, he said. Multiple players mentioned how during the summer, people from other states will come and play due to their homes on the lake.

Despite the games being very respectful amongst teammates, there is much playful bickering. They specifically call out Kyhil because of her "Marj Shot." This shot is a lob shot that goes over the heads of the opponents, making it almost impossible to return. The members say, "you got Marj'd," he said.

"The nice part is how the scheduling accommodates the working people," part-time orthopedic Cherly Morris emphasized. "Some people work during the week which makes playing harder for them. Having time slots during the day, and then some at night help with scheduling."

It is widely known at the rec center that if you miss a sign-up window, you simply do not play that day.

"Twelve players per section, and about 40 people signed up to play," Bob McIntyre said.

Castleton Recreation utilizes the Playtime Schedule app for the participants to sign-up. Players said that it is very easy to sign-up, and if you had requested to play and can't make it yourself, you simply take anyone off, and someone else has the opportunity to join.

The recreation center is not limited to pickleball, however. Drama club, horticulture club and a brand-new tai chi program are just some of the programs offered now. Yoga classes are also in the works.

"We need the rec center," Bob McIntyre stated.

Having this in the town brings people together and allows community members to have something to look forward to.

If you are looking for a



ETHAN HAGGERTY

An intense game of pickleball taking place inside the Recreational Center.

strong sense of community, the Castleton Recreation is full of it.

"College kids are encouraged to check this out," McIntyre adds.

It doesn't matter if you have no experience playing or a ton, you are welcomed at the Castleton Recreation anytime, he said.

Rebecca Makara: a new face in Res-Life

Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

Rebecca Makara, originally from Poughkeepsie, New York, is the Residence Life hall director at Castleton Univer-

sity. She earned her associate degree from SUNY Dutchess Community College and completed both her bachelor's and master's degrees at SUNY Plattsburgh. Before joining Castleton in July, she worked

as a residence life coordinator at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, where she discovered her passion for student engagement and mentorship. Outside of work, Rebecca enjoys exploring local shops, baking her

famous brownies and spending time with her beloved cats, Leo and Eloise. Known for her authenticity and student-centered approach, she encourages students to embrace who they are and follow their own

paths with confidence.

Q. Though you're not a student at Castleton, how does the campus culture here compare to that of your alma mater, SUNY Plattsburgh?

A. So, I would say this is more a small-town community feel. Students who I haven't met know me and they say, like "Hi Rebecca!" And I'm like, how do you know me? It's definitely more close-knit, I would say too. Not as hectic. Maybe a little slower pace.. Everyone just knows everyone, and you're able to create more like stronger relationships with students and with faculty staff members too.

Q. People who know you well know that your cats are a big source of joy. How did you come up with their names and what are their personalities like?

A. I'll start with Leo. I got Leo when he was 3 weeks old. He and his siblings were abandoned by their mom. He was a birthday present, I think for like my 12th birthday or my 13th, don't exactly remember. But his full legal name is Leonardo DiCatio. That's his full legal name, and I use it only when he's in trouble. He's got a big personality. He always brings me joy and is really goofy. I know when I go home today, he's gonna be so mad and lay on the floor, sprawled out saying "feed me." But he's got a big heart. He is such a snuggly cat. And, like me, sometimes when he knows when I'm having a bad day, he'll sit on the couch and sit on my lap and start purring and snuggling with me. He has just been a joy to have and just to be a constant presence in my life where if I have my bad days, I know he's always gonna be right there for me and just supporting me through it.

And then Eloise, she's just turned 10 months. She's a purebred ragdoll. I was going through like a giant list of names with my mom for like five months. Like at one point, we had 30 names on the list. Then, as we started narrowing it down, we started looking behind the meaning of what these names mean. Eloise means, famous warrior, it's a German name ... healthy, whole, wide. Also, it can be very independent, strong. I would say those are the big ones that drew me to her name. Even now, when she's developed her little personality, she's very miss-independent, cute, and very sassy. She loves her scratches on her back. She loves to play. She'll do her zoomies around the apartment, and it's really cute where she's got that big, beautiful personality that people love. And then she's also known to be carried around her backpack.

Q. When you're not in the office, what does a typical day off look like for you?

A. I would say it depends, but I really love to go explore Rutland and do a lot of shopping, going to like TJ MAXX. Walmart, shoe store. I love going antiquing and going to like different thrift stores. I've also been exploring Brandon more and doing some shopping up there. I'm always occasionally in Saratoga going to the mall and doing those things. I may also be even doing homework on my day off. I am actually starting to go back to school part-time through CCV again. I'm hoping to get an eventual associate's in Business. So, I'm doing homework on the side, on top of working here full time. I do love to attempt to cook, but I also love to bake. I'm very well known for my brownies. I also just love to sit on the couch and just do crafting. I really love to put together puzzles.

See 'Rebecca' on page 6



COURTESY OF REBECCA MAKARA

Rebecca Makara shown in Ireland, top, at her desk inside the Residence Life office, bottom left, and her cats Leo and Eloise, bottom right.

Super Bowl advertisements stole the show

Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Every year millions of people excitedly turn on their televisions to watch the Super Bowl. They put on their favorite team's jersey and passionately yell at the TV. People get together to drink beer, eat wings and other classic Super Bowl dishes like pretzels and cheese, deviled eggs, and buffalo chicken dip.

Food and football. The epitome of America.

Although it's not just the football people are excited for. The commercials are known for stepping up their game big time for the Super Bowl. It's a chance for companies to sway millions into looking into what they're selling. They want to make an impression.

Some were hilarious, some were weird, some were emotional, some were offensive.

But they were not forgettable.

A diva in a Wig Called Glen Powell.

In a Ram Trucks commercial starring Glen Powell, he portrays a Goldilocks character. The action-packed commercial shows him driving three Ram trucks and facing different obstacles.

Later it cuts to Powell telling the story to his kids and they question where the three bears are since this clearly isn't the typical Goldilocks story. He states that this is his story and the end the commercial says, "Drive your own story."

The commercial was funny and entertaining and definitely memorable. Glen Powell looks good as a blonde.

Hims and Hers and Hypocrisy

The Hims and Hers commercial sparked a lot of controversy. The commercial starts with facts about obesity in America with Childish Gambino's "This is America" playing in the background.

The commercial goes on to explain the dangers of weight loss medication and how these medications are "built to keep us sick and stuck."

But not their weight loss medication.

No, Hers and Hims weight loss medication is different.

Right, okay.

The commercial is very hypocritical to bash Big Pharma (Big pharma is used to describe large pharmaceutical companies that are a bad influence) when they themselves are Big Pharma.

The first half of the commercial seemed promising but



Caitlin Clark in Nike's Super Bowl ad.

by the end, I was filled with disappointment that Hims and Hers highlighted exactly how they are just like every other company pushing harmful weight loss drugs.

Breasts Pushing Boundaries

The breast cancer awareness ad was so clever and impactful. I really appreciated the commercials that were pushing boundaries to make a statement. The commercial displayed women's bodies, focusing on boobs. There were cheerleaders, mothers nursing, runway models, and clips of push-up bra commercials.

For something that society has been so focused on, they are paying attention to the wrong thing.

If our attention is constantly on a woman's chest, than we should at least be aware of the health risks women face.

I also thought it was really powerful how they used sex appeal and making it obvious that a woman's chest is the first

place the eye will go.

I appreciated the commercials that made loud statements like this.

Ok, Fine, Get me a Beer

All of the beer commercials really struck me in a similar way so I'm grouping them together. After I finished the commercials, I thought "yeah I'm proud to be an American I guess."

Which is really sneaky of them and shows how effective of a commercial they can

make.

One of the beer commercials that stuck with me is Michelob Ultra starring Katherine O'Hara and Willem Dafoe. This is a duo that I didn't know I needed to see but I love how competitive they are and found it a joy to watch.

The Bud Light commercial was also very fun. I like being reminded of sun and family and friends. Exactly what people want to think of when cracking open a cold one.

I thought all of the beer commercials really played to their audience.

Nike Supporting Women - I Could Cry.

You know, I watched this commercial and got chills.

The commercial is filmed in black and white and states different things that women are not allowed to do by societal standards.

Like, "You can't be emotional. So be emotional."

Then it shows all of these women yawning because it's getting so old.

I thought this was really empowering and makes me want to invest in Nike since I know where they stand with their values.

The commercial did exactly what was intended and for good reason.



First Minecraft Club at VTSU

By Jack Aicher
Castleton Spartan

The newly founded Castleton Minecraft Club is quickly gaining traction among the campus community.

Despite nearly 20 sign-ups at the recent campus Club Fair, the club is actively working to overcome challenges.

“It’s a work in progress,” said Lindsey Sherman, president of the Minecraft Club. “We’re trying to get other peoples’ perspectives on what they want to see in our servers.”

The club aims to establish a server compatible with Bedrock and Java editions of Minecraft to ensure accessibility to a broad range of members.

However, this has proven to be a challenge for the club’s organizers as financial and technical considerations have hindered their decision-making.

The club has sent out a survey to gauge student preferences, though they are still determining the best approach.

“We have to pay for a server to play on, so it’s hard to make a decision,” said Robin Chamberlain, Treasurer of the Minecraft Club. “It would be great if everyone could play on one server, but that’s probably not going to be the case.”

Despite these challenges, the club has continued to make progress. The club fair secured them 19 sign-ups, a promising start for being in its early stages.

“We filled the whole sign-up list and even went onto the back, which is super exciting,” said Chamberlain.

Currently, the club has yet to meet but is planning to operate primarily online. Given that Minecraft requires a capable computer setup, in-person meetings would be difficult to organize.

Instead, club leaders are considering utilizing an online eSports platform to arrange their meetings.

The club also hopes to offer various in-game activities, such as challenges or creative projects.

A long-term goal is to create a server that connects students across all Vermont State University campuses, said Chamberlain.

Promotional strategies are currently underway. Club members are planning on posting flyers and possibly organizing an Instagram page to spread the word and attract new members.

As the club continues to grow, club leaders acknowledge the difficulties of organizing a student-run group. From technicalities to financial decisions, the launch of the Castleton Minecraft Club has been a new experience for its members.

“Once everything gets started, I think it’ll get easier as we go,” said Sherman.

With the club’s current progress, members are optimistic about its future and involvement with the Castleton student community.

“We just hope that it grows,” said Chamberlain. “We are pretty sure that it will.”

Traps doing more harm than good?

By Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

When it comes to protecting wildlife and domesticated animals, the solution to the problem of disease infested rodents is not always a cut and dry one.

Rodenticides are a common solution to the common rodent problem, but some fear that these traps might do more harm than good.

Many of us around the VTSU Castleton campus may not be aware that rodenticides were installed around the entire campus to control rodents like rats and mice, but some are a bit weary of the traps, fearing they may be harmful to small, non-threatening wildlife or household pets, like Max the campus cat for instance.

There are many different types of rodenticides, and some are more toxic than others when it comes to pets and smaller wildlife, according to The National Pesticide Information Center.

“The rodenticides that pose the greatest secondary poisoning risks for wild mammals, dogs and cats include chlorophacinone, diphacinone, brodifacoum,”

the NPIC site reads.

However, District Manager of Vermont Pest Control Ian Gordon addressed the concerns about the rodenticides used on campus.

“Yes, they are all over campus...In terms of harm to wildlife, it’s a yes or no question,” Gordon said.

Gordon has been conducting work for VTSU Castleton for quite some time, although he said the traps were distributed across the entire campus about three months ago.

“I’ve been doing work with the campus for about 15 years or more,” Gordon reported.

He claimed that the rodenticides are “focused on rodents” and do not provide a lethal dose of toxicity to animals that are larger, such as most non-rodent wildlife and pets.

“The amount of toxicity is not enough to kill them,” Gordon said.

VTSU professor and program coordinator for Wildlife and Forest Conservation, Kristen Ross gave some pros and cons to rodent traps.

“Yes, traps can pose a threat to wildlife, but having rats or other disease carrying animals in close quarters with humans

can also pose a threat,” she said.

She also pointed out that the risk depends on the trap and the animal target.

“In terms of roaming pets, yes, any poison accessible to animals left free to roam is a threat,” she said. “In some styles of traps, a dog or cat wouldn’t be able to access the poison if the trap is designed for a target animal like a rat.”

However, the secondary poisoning could be more cause for concern depending on the trap and toxicity.

“The dog or cat roaming free might eat a poisoned animal and get sick themselves. That is the risk the pet owner takes by allowing their animal to roam free,” Ross said. “The biggest threat to wildlife, particularly birds, are outdoor cats. Outdoor cats kill over 2 billion birds a year in the U.S. alone.”

Ross addressed the larger threat to wildlife: humans.

“Usually traps are band-aid approaches to a problem that is human-driven. Unless individuals, businesses, and institutions learn to contain their trash better, there will always be temptations for animals both



AMANDA JOHNSON

Traps are set outside buildings on campus that catch critters and poison them.

wild and domestic,” she said.

While rodenticides may provide a shorter term solution, the real problem is the most difficult to address and correct. Human behavior, ultimately, is the most dangerous threat to our wildlife and even pets.

“The ultimate best solu-

tions for wildlife are to, one, keep our waste material, especially food, disposed of and contained properly,” Ross said. “And two, don’t let our pets roam free. However, these are human behaviors that need to change, which is the most difficult challenge.”

CAB Bucks, get your CAB Bucks!

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

The VTSU Castleton Campus Activities Board has unveiled a new “CAB Bucks” rewards plan to get more students to attend events.

“Rewards are so popular right now, everyone and their brother has rewards. It’s the new thing,” said graduate assistant for student activities, Marty Kelly III.

Attending events like comedy shows and music performances can earn students up to 30 CAB Bucks to tack onto their grand total for the annual CAB auction, which this year is going to be held on May 2 at 8 p.m. in the 1787 Room.

In the past, students would all receive the same amount of fake money when attending the auction. However, this led to some issues that unfortunately resulted in a rock paper scissors battle since the majority of people would save their allowance for the bigger prizes at the end.

CAB clerk Megan Mureddu and Kelly knew that they needed to come up with a new way to auction off prizes, and thought, why not try to get event attendance up at the same time?

“What is some intensive way to get students to come?” Mureddu said.

After some brainstorming with her mom, who has previously worked in a recreation department, and a couple trial and errors, the idea of CAB Bucks was born.

It was first brought up last spring semester by Mureddu and then approved by all CAB members to act on it for this semester.

“Megan presented the idea to me and said it was something she was really excited about possibly doing in the future and I agreed that it was a fabulous idea,” said Secretary of Campus Activities Aurelia Leerkes.

There are three different denominations of CAB Bucks students can receive, depending on what event they attend. All performances are worth 30 CAB Bucks and the more popular events, such as bingo and Stuff Your Own, are worth five CAB Bucks. All other events held by the CAB program are worth 15 CAB Bucks.

After looking at the CAB expenses over the semester, members say they expect to have at least double the budget for this year’s auction and will feature amazing prizes like iPads, AirPods and video game consoles.

During every event, Mureddu sits and makes a spreadsheet to track who went to what event to keep an idea of who has how many CAB Bucks, as well as to see if the new system is working in the right ways.

The excel sheet also allows for a backup way to track how many bucks each individual student has in case they lose them, and also allows for a scam-proof system.

In just three weeks of the CAB Bucks program running, the events have had more students attending than in the past.



GABBY BLANCHARD

Megan Mureddu fans out a stack of CAB bucks that students can get for attending CAB events.

“I think the amount of people we got in these first three weeks were more than we got all of last semester,” Mureddu said.

The CAB Bucks are getting more students engaged and allowing them to realize the opportunity they have to see something new.

“It is SO good to hear that students are saying, ‘oh yeah I have to come to this event so

I can get my CAB Bucks!’” Leerkes said.

The future for the business card style CAB Bucks, which are designed and printed by Mureddu, seems bright.

If responses to the program continue to thrive, they could be used for other purposes such as a possible collaboration with Fireside, Mureddu said.

The CAB program welcomes feedback and even en-

courages it so they can pick up improvements along the way of their new journey.

“These events are a great opportunity for people to get involved and have a great time, and our events are not for a certain demographic. Everybody can come and everyone can have a good time. It’s all about what you make out of it,” Mureddu said.

Castleton connections at Boys and Girls Club



HENRY ROBERTSON

Two members of the Boys and Girls Club, Elianna and Araya, smile and hug.

By Henry Robertson
Spartan Contributor

On any given weekday, you can hear laughter and see smiles through the heavily decorated front windows of the Boys and Girls Club at 75 Merchants Row in Rutland.

And when you step into the building you will be greeted by a friendly and safe environment. You’ll see around 30

kids who are learning and developing life skills with smiles on their faces.

And alongside the youth in the club you’ll see the committed staff who are devoting their time and energy back into their community.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America offers its services at 5,400 sites across the United States, 13 of which are housed in Rutland County.

“We offer after school care to somewhere around 275 kids daily,” said Malik Hines, director of Operations for the Boys & Girls Club of Rutland County and Castleton graduate. “We’re serving around 250 kids snack and 150 to 160 kids dinner every day.”

Nicole Rice, executive director and another Castleton graduate, has been working with the organization for three

years. “We employ somewhere between 15-20 Castleton students each year,” Rice said.

The Boys and Girls Club (BGCA) of Rutland County employs many individuals who are committed to serving the youth of the area, and many of these employees are former or current students at Castleton.

“Our growth over the course of the last year and a half would absolutely not have been possible without Castleton students,” Rice said.

The BGCA’s mission statement is to enable all young people, especially those who need them most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

“The idea that parents can work and know that their kids are in a safe space, where they are gaining new skills and having social and emotional opportunities to develop outside of the school day is incredibly important,” Rice said.

Iris Hudson, who serves as the director of Finance, has been working with the club for five years and started when she was a student at Castleton.

“It’s very easy to build a community within the Boys and Girls Club because a lot of our staff have a connection through Castleton,” Hudson said.

Hines also spoke about the connection to Castleton.

“It’s all about the people you meet and the relationships you build that allow you to get to the places you want to be,” Hines said. “And Castleton has allowed me to meet a bunch of

people within the community who I still work with to this day.”

Both Hudson and Hines regularly connect with former professors from Castleton to further the reach of the organization and ensure it’s meeting the youths’ needs.

“We’re even more of a family than what people might think because we have these ties to Castleton,” Hines said.

When asked the question what makes club fun, Araya Allen, 8, offered a quick response.

“The staff,” she said.

This is a common feeling among many club members, says Hines.

“Some of the members are not only coming back because of their friends and the programming, but because of the connections they’ve made with the staff,” Hines said.

Wyatt Jackson Jr, a current member of the VTSU Castleton master’s program, has been working at the BGCA for over a year.

Not only have these Castleton students and graduates contributed greatly to the community of the greater Rutland area, they say they have been positively impacted by the connections they’ve made.

“What the kids have done for me, and also what the entire program has done for myself, has given me not only a sense of community but a sense of belonging,” Jackson said.



ISIAH HUGHES
VTSU Castleton student Vincent Padilla’s butterfly tattoo is in honor of a bond with his grandmother.

Tattoo of the week:

Butterfly connection

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

For VTSU Castleton student Lou Padilla, tattoo art means more than just body embellishments. They serve as stories etched into skin.

His most recent addition, which appears on his right shin, is a Blue Morpho butterfly and it holds great emotional value because it represents his grandmother and their shared butterfly fascination.

“My grandma taught me to love butterflies,” Padilla shared. “She had this beautiful wildflower garden that would always attract butterflies. It was like magic.”

Padilla spent his childhood exploring butterfly sanctuaries by his grandmother’s side as they watched these delicate creatures in their natural environment. Butterflies became his favorite animal because they symbolized both natural beauty and the strong connections he experienced with his grandmother.

“Butterflies always stood out to me,” Padilla said. “The color wasn’t all; these creatures would suddenly emerge shining as they appeared in the sunlight.”

His grandmother’s garden featured an old oak tree that displayed metal butterflies. The butterflies’ permanent place in his grandmother’s domain have remained with him.

When it came time to

choose a tattoo, the decision was easy.

“The Blue Morpho represents love,” Padilla explained. “I wanted this because now we aren’t together as often as we used to be.”

He recalled the sanctuary visits, and the oak tree decorated with metal butterflies in his grandmother’s garden when he chose the tattoo.

Although Padilla’s grandmother isn’t a huge fan of tattoos, he got her approval for this one.

“She actually loves it,” Padilla said. “She told me she appreciates what it represents. That meant everything to me.”

The artwork was detailed and designed by Lapiz, “@slavesofink” from Bronx, New York. It was designed to precisely replicate the butterfly’s iridescent blue colors for a delicate appearance. This body art goes beyond a physical adornment to become an iconic representation of memory and bond beyond temporal boundaries.

The butterflies, he explained, represent more than insects because they symbolize his grandmother’s spirit which remains nearby.

“I believe each time I observe these creatures in nature, my grandmother would be giving me her hello,” he said smiling. “This idea brings beautiful meaning into life, don’t you agree with me?”

Arts & Entertainment

Grammy Awards leaves some happy, others (like the writer) not so much

By Carly Centeno
Castleton Spartan

The 67th Annual Grammy Awards took place on Feb. 2, with Trevor Noah hosting for the fifth year. The event left many viewers with a mix of emotions; some feeling excited, sad, and even confused.

From Beyonce’s win for Album of the Year to Kendrick Lamar’s song “Not Like Us” winning Record of the Year, the audience was taken through a roller-coaster of emotions.

For a while, The Grammys have been a hotbed for conspiracy theories and filled with controversial wins, snubs, and allegations of industry politics.

Beyonce’s win for Best Album of the Year and Best Country Album of the Year struck a lot of people with confusion and shock. There were many other artists who fans thought would have been a better choice for the Album of the Year, like Billie Eilish or Charli XCX.

Fans were very proud of Billie Eilish’s newest album, making it one of her best. So inevitably, they were extremely disappointed seeing Billie close to tears after Beyonce had just won.

Charli XCX had an incredibly popular album, titled “Brat,” which took the world, and especially social media by storm. You may have heard the term “Brat” or “Brat Summer” in reference to Charli’s album on social media.

“Brat” was an era in music that everyone enjoyed, and many believed should’ve secured the spot.

Both of Eilish and Charli’s albums are extremely popular, but Beyonce’s album, not so much. In fact, many people have only heard one of the songs off the album due to it going viral on TikTok.

“Billie worked so hard on her most recent album; you could tell how personally she took this loss. She is so proud of this album, there’s no way Beyonce should’ve won, there’s only one song on her entire album that people only know the chorus too,” student Audrey Steinman said.

Kendrick Lamar swept his nominations at the Grammys and left with five wins for his



Kendrick Lamar was a big winner at this years Grammy Awards, Others, including Beyonce, also took home Grammys that left some on the VTSU Castleton campus scratching their heads.

song “Not like Us.” He won both Record and Song of the Year, making history for being the most-awarded song at the Grammys.

Lamar was also the second rap artist to ever win in these categories after Childish Gambino in 2019. Lamar’s song “Not Like Us” started off as just a diss track to come at the rapper Drake, after arguing about who is part of “Big Three.” This song went crazy viral all-over social media because of how catchy it is and how much it exposes Drake. Even though Drake has sued Kendrick for the song, Lamar still made it a part of his 2025 Super Bowl Halftime show, which happened to be one of the most viewed halftime shows in history.

“Kendrick doesn’t mess around. It was great to see him

get the recognition he deserves, and I bet Drake is crying like a baby seeing his diss track win five awards at the Grammys,” Gretel Seamen said.

Doechii had a very exciting night at the Grammys as well. Winning Best Rap Album and being the third woman to ever receive the award. Her acceptance speech had many in tears and excited to see what more is to come. Her performance at the Grammys was like no other and had many music legends out of their seats, dancing. They left praising her and her performance.

Chappell Roan won Best New Artist and dedicated her speech to demeaning record labels. She expressed her thoughts on how the music industry should be paying a living wage for new and upcoming artists and gave an amazing

performance of her song “Pink Pony Club.” It was a magical moment for both her and those who have watched her grow as an artist and performer.

“Chappell Roan was guaranteed a win for this award. She is so amazing and after watching her grow, it was obvious she was the next up-and-coming pop star. From opening for Olivia Rodrigo to having 110,000 people in the audience for her GovBall performance,” Olivia Whiting said.

The Grammys were an eventful night for artists and their fans. Even though people disagreed about the outcome of many different awards, it was still a great night for many.

The FAC’s silver throne

By Joe Vyvial
Castleton Spartan

Becoming a famous artist and making money doing art wasn’t on the radar when James Hampton rented a carriage house for his special project.

In 1950, a 41-year-old the General Services Administration janitor decided to prepare for Christ’s return to earth.

Over the next 14 years, Hampton built a complex work of religious art called the “Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations’ Millennium General Assembly.” The piece is based on biblical prophecies and several religious visions that Hampton had experienced.

He worked with various scavenged materials from his neighborhood including jelly jars, old furniture, light bulbs and hand-crafted elements from cardboard and plastic.

Most of it was then wrapped in aluminum and gold foil, and put together with glue, pins and tape. He kept it to himself the whole time as well. The piece was discovered after his death,

by his garage owner, who went to check why his rent had not been paid.

VTSU Castleton art professor Oliver Schemm’s Professional Studio Art class took Hampton’s work as an inspiration for their project early this semester. They collected and used objects from the Fine Arts Center and the Wooldridge house and wrapped them all up in tin foil.

“We’ve used eight, maybe ten rolls of tin foil,” Schemm said.

Matthew Stoddard, one of the students in the class, described the effort further.

“We tried to use two of each things, to have symmetry,” he said.

The class have spent around three hours to create what Schemm called this “shiny, ridiculous, uncanny thing.”

“People like shiny things,” another student, Abigail Murphy added.

Another student chimed in, “we’re all crows in a way.”

Graphic design professor Bill DeForest, is going to be doing a collaborative drawing



Art Professor Oliver Schemm’s Professional Studio Art Class paid homage to artist James Hampton with a sculpture of objects covered in tin foil.

project for his Intro to Drawing class.

The purpose of this project,

Schemm said, was to show students that you can make art from nothing. You don’t need

any expensive equipment or technology, as long as you have an interesting idea, and

you stay committed to it.

Standout Spaces blog: Room features skiing, soft light and sprinkles

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

Hey! I’m Emily, the author of the blog Standout Spaces where we’ll dive into the unique ways students turn their dorms into their own personalized havens. From the peaceful minimalism of one student’s calm oasis, to another’s loud and artistic vibe of a space, no two rooms are the same and I’m here to show you that! Many students have tips on how to make their space usable by reshaping and remodeling, so let’s explore!

“I don’t think I am the right person to interview for this,” Katie said uncomfortably.

But, I think that this is untrue.

In Morril 302 in room A, Katie Stager, a senior at VTSU Castleton, has one of the coziest and comfiest dorm rooms I have ever been in. But with Stager, what you see is what you get.

As soon as you enter her room, the first thing

you’ll notice is not an inch of her walls are not covered.

And it’s evident, she loves to ski. “My life is skiing. It just makes sense that my room shows that,” she said.

One of the walls in her room is covered with photos, but only photos of skiing. Her family is shown on the lift up the mountain, a few of her friends are shown after a wipeout with their skis planted in the snow around them, and a very special picture shows her and boyfriend toasting their ski trip with fireball shooters at the top of the mountain.

Another wall in her room is veiled with a beautiful tapestry showing two people skiing over the Appalachian Mountains.

To Katie, skiing is everything.

“Oh yeah, I have my skis in the corner,” she says motioning to the corner of her room.

Katie’s room smells like vanilla and fresh laundry. She has multiple soft lit yellow lamps



EMILY ELY
A glimpse inside Katie Stager’s room.

around her room with warm colored string lights lining the ceiling.

“I’m scared of the big light. If you turn it on, you’re kicked out,” she said with a laugh.

Her room is full of snacks too. Pretzels, chips, multiple cereals, and surprisingly, a huge container of rainbow sprinkles.

“You just never know when they’ll come in handy,” Katie said when questioned about her sprinkles.

Katie also has some of the coolest decor I’ve seen. Alongside all the photos of her skiing memories, she has many posters dedicated to music artist Harry Styles. There’s a board with a quote from her favorite song reading “We’ll be alright.” She has a whole shelf dedicated to fake plants, some true fake plants and some created out of Legos.

When asked about this shelf, Stager replied bluntly, “I just like plants. I told you I’m not a good person to interview.”

Though I learned that may be true, after Katie’s room spoke more to me than she did, this has been one of my favorite rooms to cover on Standout Spaces and I am excited to get into her stash of sprinkles.

Travels:

Continued from page 1

Her main motivation was to gain a stronger sense of independence. In reflection, she has succeeded.

“Although it seemed so scary, I met so many new people, grew as a person, gained independence, and learned so many new things about myself. I also realized that I’m not a huge Guinness fan,” she said.

One reason individuals do not take the leap to see the world is rooted in our brains: the fear of failure. Learning to accept that things can and will go wrong is not easy to accept but is an essential lesson that can be applied to all aspects of life.

“It’s totally okay when things don’t go to plan; it’s part of the learning experience,”

Ezzo said.

Tennis agreed.

“It wasn’t perfect all the time, but it’s an experience I would never trade for anything,” she said.

Another VTSU student is about to embark on his own venture to New Zealand. Tristan Thomas, a Wildlife and Forest Conservation major, has his intentions set on the region due to its biodiversity and abundance of endangered species.

“I think it’s crucial to see the world. I’ve always wanted to,” Thomas said.

There are a couple of traits in common with all the individuals interviewed. For one, they all described their experiences of planning their travel as spontaneous and, “on a whim.”

For Ezzo, her college plans completely changed in three hours; leaving behind a plan to play soccer at Plattsburgh with her sister to pursue National Outdoor Leadership School in Patagonia. The mental block of traveling on your own is only resolved by taking a leap.

“Now, as a college student, is the perfect time, and there’s never going to be another time in your life where you have built-in breaks,” she said.

If you are seeking self-discovery and adventure, what is stopping you? The world is waiting.

“You’re very unlikely to regret it in the long run. Part of life is taking risks,” Thomas said.



COURTESY REILLY TENNIS AND JESS EMERY

VTSU Castleton students Jess Emery and Reilly Tennis recently studied abroad in Europe.

Car thefts:

Continued from page 1

Another student, Trey Lavigne, had a new truck battery taken but was pleased that his more expensive items remained untouched.

“They could’ve stolen my snowboard and other winter gear, which is not cheap, but they didn’t,” he said.

Lavigne assumes that for economic reasons the crimes are occurring.

“I believe people are breaking in since, during this season, they may be out of a job and need a way to make money,” he said. “Many jobs are seasonal and occur in spring or summer, such as landscaping, paving, etc.”

Students like Rylee Pepin are worried that the break-ins take place so close to their houses.

“It was pretty frightening. Not even that my car was broken into, because nothing was taken, but that they were in our driveway, so close to our house.”

Frustration is growing among students and community members as these break-ins occur more frequently. Childs, whose car is still missing, has taken it upon himself to look for it in surrounding towns.

“I have been keeping a lookout,” he said. “I find myself checking behind houses and other buildings when I’m driving through Rutland and Fair Haven to see if I can find my car.”

Mantello emphasized that prevention is key.

“People think their cars are being broken into, but really, most of these cases involve unlocked vehicles,” he said. “If there’s something valuable in plain sight, then they might break in, but a lot of these cars have been unlocked.”

Mantello recommended taking simple security precautions to prevent becoming victims.

“The biggest thing is prevention—lock your car doors, don’t leave valuables inside, and be situationally aware,” he said. “If you see someone creeping around, and I hate to use the word ‘creeping,’ but everyone does, report it. We can check them out, and see if they belong in the area.”

Authorities warn that thefts may increase as spring and summer approach. As the weather gets warmer and more people start to go out at night, this could become an issue.

Mantello also advised students and homeowners to consider installing security cameras, saying that even small, portable cameras that use Wi-Fi can be effective.

For the time being, Castleton students and locals are on high alert, hoping for answers—and that the thefts will stop.

Rebecca:

Continued from page 3

Sudoku. Even watching TV. I’m really big into watching sports. I love watching hockey, especially the New York Rangers.

Q. Do you have any memorable experiences or interactions with a student that stand out?

A. One day I spoke with this one student and we talked a lot about where his academic journey was going and did he have a social circle in his major? How were his classes going? What was his reason for being there? Where does he see himself going? It turns out his major wasn’t for him. He wanted to do something completely else. He was so scared of changing his major, because it was so late into his college career and I said, it’s not too late for someone like me. I personally decided with my major that I really didn’t want to pursue that career in my final semester, my senior year of college. And I used that experience to empower, it’s not too late. This is all you can do and connect him with appropriate resources. He eventually changed majors and he’s doing a lot better. He’s found a better community. There’s other paths out there. You just have to be empowered enough to have the courage to take that path.

Q. I saw that you previously worked as a residence life coordinator at Allegheny

College. How has that experience influenced your transition to the same role at Castleton?

A. I worked in an even smaller department than I do here, but that really prepared me and launched my whole career. It was my first introduction to what it means to work in higher education, specifically residence life. I had no clue what I was doing when I started. However, when I first started, I had a colleague. Her name is Annie. I’ll shout her out. She was amazing at helping me transition into my role and helping me figure out who I am as a higher education professional and who I am as a residence life coordinator, and who I wanna be. She was amazing in my transition and really supported me throughout. It really taught me a lot about time management, organization, and how I wanna be as a supervisor and how I wanna lead my staff and be a role model for my students. It really taught me a lot about how to engage with students and what style works for me. It just set me on the right path.

Q. If you could switch roles with anyone at Castleton for a day, who would it be and why?

A. I would honestly switch places with Q at Huden. Every day I walk into Huden for breakfast or lunch, she is always greeting me with the best warm welcome. If I want a hug, she’ll give me a hug. She always has a smile on her face and is really supportive of our work here as residence

life professionals, but also supportive of making sure the students are well cared for. And standing on her own and making sure that she has the backs of her fellow staff members. And that’s who I envision myself to be right now. Like she’s the best person, she’s awesome, we love Q.

Q. Do you have any hidden talents?

A. Professional cat whisperer.

Q. What’s your favorite off-campus spot to visit in Castleton?

A. Shout out Third Place pizzeria. Every Wednesday you’ll see me there with my trivia team, The League of Extraordinary Guessers. Shout to Sean Williams and James Wolfe. Our team is always middle of the pack or a little bit above. We have fun and we each have our own strong suits. I fill the role of sports knowledge and just general knowledge, awesome.

Q. What’s the best piece of advice you’ve ever received?

A. I consider myself to be a very introverted person and that’s how I really connect with students. I really try to work with them on their level and not be so extroverted and excited, but just kind of just be me and own it. It allows me to work with students and establish that connection with them, especially if they’re going through rough times, and they just need someone to talk



COURTESY REBECCA MAKARA

Rebecca Makara poses by the ocean in Ireland.

to. That’s just owning part of my life. I’m a crazy cat lady, and I will own that in this paper in this interview. Own it. And that’s authentic and pure and that’s who I am. I’m unfiltered. I own it. My advice for students is to be who they are and own it. Don’t be afraid of what other people say. Stick true to who you are, no matter what.

Q. What’s your go-to favorite meal from Huden?

A. I’m gonna say a vanilla chocolate twist, cone or bowl. But with different kinds of toppings. That’s my go to dessert. Go to meal would probably be taco Tuesday. I love me some tacos.

Vt. study looks at bird flu impact on dairy

Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

Avian Influenza (H5N1 Bird Flu) is an influenza-based disease causing major outbreaks and dramatic effects on U.S. agriculture. According to the Financial Times, The H5N1 outbreak is having extreme effects on the U.S. agriculture industry, particularly in the poultry and dairy farming industries.

Since 2022, the virus itself has led to the controlled killing of millions of birds, causing huge disruptions in egg and poultry meat supplies. The virus has also directly affected dairy cattle.

In April 2024, a human case of H5N1 infection was reported in Texas, linked to exposure to infected dairy cows. Though this incident is scary, it ultimately highlights the potential for cross-species transmission and the importance of monitoring dairy herds.

According to WPTZ Plattsburgh- Burlington, in a concerted effort to combat the spread of avian influenza, the Green Mountain state has joined a national milk testing strategy aimed at monitoring and controlling the virus’s impact on dairy herds.

The initiative is part of a broader national response to the H5N1 strain. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), The National Milk Testing Strategy was created in 2024 and is designed to detect the presence of Avian Influenza in dairy herds across the nation. The program runs off collecting and analyzing milk samples from dairy farms to identify potential infections early, enabling swift containment measures.

As of January 2025, 28

states, including Vermont, have enrolled in the program, representing nearly 65% of the nation’s milk production.

The Green Mountain state’s involvement in this initiative underscores the state’s commitment to safeguarding its dairy industry.

According to the Vermont General Assembly, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM) has been conducting monthly testing of cow milk from dairy farm bulk tanks. Additionally, all lactating dairy cows moving across state lines are tested to prevent the spread of the virus.

According to the CDC, though the primary concern has been the impact on agriculture, public health officials have also been vigilant. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported sporadic human cases



COURTESY GAVIN BRADLEY

Milk from Vermont cows will now be tested for bird flu.

of H5N1, primarily among individuals with direct exposure to infected animals.

The CDC maintains that the public health risk remains low, emphasizing the importance of biosecurity measures on farms to prevent human infections. There is still a lot of knowledge that we do not know about in the world around us. Some of it can be stressful to take in, especially when you’re focusing on a viral disease like Bird Influenza.

However, in these beyond-stressful situations, it is vital to know what you do have control over and what you do not. It is extremely important that Vermont has joined the National Milk Testing Strategy to protect farms and livestock in the Green Mountain state.

‘Balling on a budget’ saving on food edition

Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

Balling on a Budget is a blog about saving money as a college student. The subject this week is everyone’s favorite: food!

Let’s talk about my favorite thing to spend money on: food. I am so guilty of spending way too much money on food, whether it’s ordering from Third Place for the second time that week or getting sucked into the Halloween-shaped pasta that’s \$6 at Hannaford.

I think of college as being in a competitive reality TV show. Still, instead of competing for a million bucks, you’re fighting to survive on Ramen noodles and, if lucky, a free pizza slice from the many events on campus. Luckily, there are some hacks to keep you fed

without blowing your budget.

Here’s how to master eating like a college pro and save precious dollars. You don’t need to break the bank when it comes to food. Whether you’re living on or off campus, I will provide the best ways to “steal a meal” and how I mastered eating for cheap.

Can’t live without caffeine!

If you have a coffee addiction (and who doesn’t?), purchasing a daily latte from Dunkin’ Donuts or Starbucks will deplete your savings. Hack the system! Invest in an inexpensive coffee maker and a reusable cup, and you’ll be your own barista. Coffee makers are now on sale at Walmart for \$10, which I consider to be a steal. If you want to be bougie, add some flavored syrup from the grocery store, and you’ll have a Starbucks-quality drink for less than a dollar.

Embrace the Power of PB&J

Don’t sleep on the classic peanut butter and jelly sandwich. If you say that peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are for kids, you’re lying to yourself. This combo is cheap, easy, and hits the spot every single time. Plus, it’s practically gourmet compared to



RYLEE PEPIN

Maddie Lindgren mixing up some hummus.

some of the meat they serve at Huden. And, peanut butter is an excellent source of many nutrients that our body needs. Pro tip: Huden has to-go containers of jelly and peanut butter. I’ll leave that there.

Become a Free Food Ninja

The golden rule of college life: NEVER pass up free food. Is there a club event that

includes pizza? A dorm party with extra chips? Mac and cheese cook-offs? You should be there like a food-seeking rocket. This is a great way to involve yourself in campus life and make a few friends. Who knows, you might even become involved in something interesting (or at least leave with a full stomach).

Embrace your dining hall as well. Huden can be scary—we all know that—but its food. This way, you don’t need to spend unnecessary money on ordering out when you could get chicken nuggets and fries at Huden. They also have to-go containers that you can purchase for a small price. Fill that thing up to the brim!

Know where to shop

If you’re not doing your food shopping at Aldi, what are you doing? Aldi has everything you could ever dream of for half the price. The other day, I went to compare the prices of cartons of eggs at Hannaford and Aldi. Aldi eggs were going for \$3.15, and Hannaford eggs were going for \$6.10. No way am I spending that on eggs. Aldi is affordable and fun. Don’t go on a Sunday, though; it’s a zoo. Cooking will always be cheaper than ordering out every night or making the occasional trip to Dollar General to get a frozen pizza. Go grocery shopping and make something yummy!

With these tips at your disposal, you’ll be dining like a boss in no time. Remember, it’s not about living off Ramen forever; it’s about upping your game and stretching your money as far as it will go. Happy dining, and may free food always be in your favor!

Spartans split against the Huskies



CASTLETONSPORTS
Zach Trepner celebrating scoring a goal with other Spartans.

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

After Castleton’s buy week, they were sent on the road to Gorham, to play University of Maine. With a long bus ride behind them, the Spartans were ready to take on the Huskies. Tired from the journey but fueled by determination, they stepped off the bus, focused and eager to prove themselves on the ice.

Castleton took control early, with Jackson Kobelka opening the scoring with help from Balint Mesterhazy and Stone Stelzl, giving the Spartans a 1-0 lead after the first period. In the second period, Aiden Robson and Emmett McHardy teamed up to assist Chance Heaphy, who capitalized on the chance to extend Castleton’s led to 2-0 midway through the frame.

The standout performance came from Josh Ward, who was sensational in net for Castleton. The junior goalie from Ottawa, Ontario, faced 33 shots

and stopped every one of them, earning his first career shutout in the victory. Ward said, “It feels really good to finally get a shoutout under my belt. Sort of feels like a reward that’s been a long time coming for not just myself but the whole team. I’m hoping we can end the season on a good note next weekend against Elmira.” The Spartans’ dominance continued as Andrew Stefura set up Emmett McHardy on a power play, allowing McHardy to net his seventh goal of the season and give Castleton a commanding 3-0 lead.

Entering the third period with all the momentum, Mesterhazy provided his second assist of the game to Kobelka, who bagged his second goal of the game to push the lead to 4-0 and record his first career multi-goal game. The Spartans wrapped up their offensive assault with first-years Colby Speth and Trevor Castino assisting senior Zach Trepner, who scored his fifth goal of the

season and the 15th of his career, to seal the 5-0 victory.

With a dominant performance on both ends of the ice, Castleton claimed the win in game one of their series against the Huskies.

The second game went a bit differently for Castleton. Zach Trepner set the tone early for the Spartans, assisting Trevor Castino for his third goal of the season to give Castleton a 1-0 lead.

However, Southern Maine answered back with just over a minute remaining in the first period, leveling the score at 1-1. In net for Castleton, Josh Ward continued his strong play following a career performance in game one.

Ward recorded 26 saves in the second game, keeping the Spartans in contention throughout the match. The Huskies grabbed their first lead of the night early in the second period, scoring five minutes in to take a 2-1 advantage. Trepner responded with his second as-

sist of the evening, setting up Anthony Persi for his first goal of the season to tie the game at 2-2.

Speaking to Persi about this he stated, “It definitely felt good to be able to help chip in on the scoreboard and help the guys out in any way I can. Felt a bit of relief to finally get the first one of the year.” Southern Maine took control once again, scoring twice more in the second period to build a 4-2 lead heading into the final frame.

The Spartans came out firing in the third period, out shooting the Huskies 16-5 as they relentlessly sought a way back into the game.

Despite their efforts, the Huskies found the back of the net one more time on the empty net to secure a 5-2 victory and split the series with the Spartans. Castleton returns next weekend to play at Elmira College, this will be their last two games of the season.

Stene adds onto her Spartan legacy

By Jack Aicher
Spartan Contributor

Emilie Stene has made Castleton history this ski season, shattering school records and building powerful bonds with teammates and coaches, claiming her spot as one of the most inspiring skiers on the team.

But beyond her unquestionable talent on the slopes is her passion, her humility, and her ability to inspire others.

Now more than halfway through the season, Stene has set a podium record with a time of 2:23.89 while also breaking the Castleton win streak record with 21 wins. Her impact has extended further than just school records—her presence on the team is undoubtedly uplifting and she has proven to be an exceptional teammate.

For Stene, breaking records wasn’t part of the plan.

“I didn’t even know the records existed until last year,” she said.

It wasn’t until returning home for a following race that Stene realized she had made the record books.

“After I won, my coach said that last week I broke the podium record and this week I broke the winning streak record,” said Stene. “It’s cool, but I wouldn’t have thought about it when I started.”

Despite her personal achievements, Stene has always focused on the success of the team.

“We have way harder competition this year,” she said. “I was thinking that this year we were just going to do our jobs and win as a team. I didn’t really expect to break any records.”

This season, Stene has battled a back problem that limits her training, yet she has remained a consistent force of the mountain.

“I can’t ski too many days in a row. When we have a race

Saturday and Sunday, I can’t practice Mondays at school,” she said. “I do go to the gym and free ski on my own, and when I can, I will go with the team.”

Balancing, academics, work, and the commitment to student athletics has been another challenge.

“I have two jobs here on campus and I am also double majoring with a double minor, so I don’t really have a lot of time to be 100% focused on skiing,” she said.

Stene’s ability to perform under pressure comes from her unique approach to racing. While most skiers inspect and practice the course prior to racing, she embraces another practice.

“I don’t inspect the course,” she said. “It’s a bit weird and I get a lot of comments about it but, it’s what works for me. Instead of getting in my head, I just go for it.”

Looking forward into the season, Stene’s focus remains on the success of the team.

“I will do all I can to win a couple more medals, but most important is helping the team win,” she said. “In previous years, I have won at regionals, I have won at nationals, so for me the next step is making sure the team wins.”

“We don’t have any seniors; the juniors are the oldest. I want to help the younger skiers understand how to be part of the team and to not feel alone,” said Stene.

Her leadership and commitment to the team is what truly sets her apart.

“Emilie is a true leader and other athletes on the team look up to her,” said Christopher Eder, head Alpine Ski coach at Castleton. “She rises to the occasion when it is most important.”

Eder wasn’t surprised by Stene’s performance this season. He explained how she has evolved over her seasons



CASTLETONSPORTS
Emilie Stene on her way to setting records on her run down West Mountain in Queensbury, New York.

at Castleton and how she has focused on being a supportive teammate.

“I knew Emilie would post strong results this season. She is the defending USCSA Giant Slalom National Champion. In fact, today (2/15/25) she captured her second USCSA Eastern Regional Giant Slalom title,” said Eder. “Emilie has adapted well to the team aspect of college racing and has consistently put the team’s goals ahead of her own.”

Emilie’s leadership and positive influence has reflected on that of her teammates and has shown her support for her team throughout her career.

“She is just so humble,” said Castleton alpine racer Ella Hall. “I can’t put into words how amazing she is as a person and teammate.”

Hall explained Stene’s ability to support and communicate with her teammates. She told about her impact on team morale, her uplifting demeanor, and the reciprocal effect it has had on the team.

“One of the group goals was just always being there for each other,” said Hall. “We will always have her back—I think she knows that deep down we will all love her no matter what.”

When asked to describe

Stene in a word, Hall chose “passionate.”

“On the slopes, she’s passionate about skiing—her enthusiasm, her positivity—and off the slopes she’s passionate about who she’s around; especially her teammates,” she said.

Having grown up in Norway, Stene originally planned to quit skiing and enter the military, until she had the opportunity to ski and study in the U.S.

“In Europe, college and sports don’t combine. Being here has given me a lot of opportunities,” she said.

Throughout her journey, Stene has shown her appreciation for her biggest supporter:

her dad.

“He has driven me every weekend for hours and hours,” said Stene. “Until I was 18, he was at every race. Now with a six-hour time different it doesn’t always work out, but he’s still watching every race live. I owe him a lot.”

Looking ahead, Stene and her team are devoted to finishing out a strong season.

“The season is not over yet and I believe she has more to give before it is all over. She, and the rest of the women, have a goal of getting on the team podium and ultimately winning at the USCSA National Championships,” said Eder.

Butler is built to be a Spartan

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

After a year of uncertainty while taking care of his grandma who was pushing him to go back to school and play basketball, Troy Butler found himself on the Castleton campus looking for his chance to do what his grandma wanted for him and get back on the court.

“I began the hunt on looking for opportunities and I stumbled upon Castleton after seeing some information online and having my old juco coach reach out to Culpo. He gave the word, and Culpo had me up for a visit and I was sold on the opportunity,” Butler said.

“We actually never saw Troy play in person, we went off of tape and SUNY Adirondack’s coach’s recommendation. That combination was enough for us to recruit him here. From the tape, we could see that he was physically gifted and had a gear that nobody else in our program possessed,” said head coach Paul Culpo.

The sophomore guard joined the Spartans during the second half of the year and has fit in like a glove on the court. Butler has started all 13 games

he’s played in while averaging 15.2 points per game with a 30% field goal percentage.

“We were excited for our second half due to making two great additions to the team and Troy was one of them,” said assistant coach Joe Russell.

Despite coming in halfway through the season, and it’s never easy to bring in a player midseason, Culpo feels as through the transition with Butler coming in was much smoother due to him being at the practices in the fall.

Since joining the Spartans, Butler has been the leading scorer, but Culpo says it hasn’t come without adjustments. “Troy is so physically gifted; probably has as much physical ability as any player I have ever coached. The challenge has been getting him to harness that talent. He is learning to play the game in a manner that benefits the team over his individual talent, something he really hasn’t had to do in the past,” he said.

“For example, in our win versus Eastern Connecticut, Troy only shot the ball nine times, yet his impact on us winning that game was by far the biggest impact he has had on any game this season, and he

has taken upwards to 20+ shots in many other games. So, for him he is learning to harness and use his gifts in a way that is still new to him. It’s a work in progress,” Culpo said.

Leading up to Butler becoming a Spartan, in August prior to coming to Castleton, his grandmother who had pushed him to get back on the court had passed away.

“I continue to play with her living through me,” Butler said.

Even with her passing, she left Troy with a gift from pushing him to get back on the court and becoming a Spartan.

“The best part about being a Spartan is the connection basketball was able to bring me with my teammates. I have built what I believe is a lifetime brotherhood and the joy of playing basketball and sharing the court with a great group of guys goes a long way,” Butler said.

Butler and the Spartans look to build off their 77-64 victory over Eastern Connecticut going into the final game of the season against University of Southern Maine at Glenbrook Gym on Saturday Feb. 22.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TROY BUTLER

Field Hockey attacks the off-season

By Caitlin Connolly
Spartan Contributor

An out-of-season athlete is not practicing every day or partaking in games, but they still have an immense amount of work to put in that people probably don't realize. This can include indoor practices and lifting sessions and bonding exercises during their off season. The VTSU Castleton field hockey team, for example, is utilizing its off-season as a step forward toward the upcoming fall season. Field hockey coaches meticulously plan their off-season to prepare the team for the fall. Not only do the girls lift two to three times a week, but they also have boot camps every Friday. Once the weather gets warmer, they will imminently start stick work outside. Currently, one unique strategy the women are also implementing into the off-season regime is the book club. They are reading the book titled "Row the Boat" by P.J. Fleck and Jon

Gordan. First-year player Ava LaRoss reflected on the book. "This book is about a football coach turning around his team dynamic in order to bring a losing team to a team of champions. Overall, this book is mostly about changing your mindset. This is something that we've been implementing into our practices because it helps encourage us and drives us to be better. We don't have practice, we get to practice. We don't have to wake up and run, we get to wake up and run," she said. Field Hockey coach Emily Douglas further emphasized the importance of book clubs. "Book club helps with our internal drive. Rather than our negative thoughts, we need to focus on the positive," she said. Along with book club and lifts, the women have a 7 a.m. boot camp every Friday. For about an hour, they focus on conditioning and stamina. Junior Peyton Richardson talked about the importance of the boot camps.

"At our boot camps, we do a lot of running and sprinting. But, the main focus is to push one another. Whenever we want to give up, we have to keep pushing and encouraging each other. We're pushing our limits. We can always do one more rep," she said. Douglas purposely uses these strategies to make her team better on and off the field. "When we're out of season, we have the opportunity to focus on our team culture. We need to connect with one another, so that our bond is strong come next season. And when new players join, they can branch off of that," Douglas said. Douglas said book club and off-season practices better her team, but also each player individually. "Spring season helps with individual growth. We can work on hitting progressions, stick skills, and speed. Whereas in the fall we're more focused on the team strategy. In the Spring, we can focus on ourselves."



COURTESY CAITLIN CONNOLLY
The field hockey team poses during a break from an offseason workout in the shaoe gym.

Continuing the domination

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton Spartans wrestling has been a staple in Castleton sports over the past couple years. Head coach Scott Legacy is in his ninth year with the program and continues to sustain high level success, posting a team record of 22-3 this season. Legacy has fostered a culture within the team that's become infectious and Legacy believes their culture has been the driving force for the team's recent success. "Our starters have been tremendous leaders, but we have bench guys who have bought in as well," Legacy said. "We all work hard on the mat while making sure we do the right things off the mat as well. Our guys love to chase competition, so we try to wrestle the best teams in the country putting ourselves in situations where we don't fear losing," Legacy added. But being a Castleton wrestler is more than just how impactful you can be on the mat. It's more than an athlete's overall skillset as a wrestler. Legacy's goal is to mold these student-athletes into phenomenal young men who develop a mindset that is devoted to all things in life. "Our program encourages our athletes to buy into the small-town college lifestyle where there isn't much of a downtown atmosphere, which is different from most colleges," Legacy said. "We ask our guys to be committed to wrestling 365 days a year, but we also take pride in keeping academics first as well as being good people in the community. It's important for us to break barriers together, become good leaders, and establish unity within the team." This fresh perspective of



CASTLETONSPORTS
Graduate Student Haven Tatarek goes for the take down against a Williams wrestler.

becoming a respected student-athlete has given wrestlers the confidence to achieve high levels of success throughout their career. Graduate student James Rodriguez is an example. Rodriguez has registered a phenomenal collegiate career and is regarded as one of the most humble athletes on campus. "What has motivated me is being able to finish what I started and being able to improve in every aspect both on or off the mat," Rodriguez said. "Showing my family and teammates that anything is possible if you commit to the process while staying consistent to learning and improving yourself. My ultimate goal is to know that I did everything I possibly could

to help improve myself in every aspect and gain the tools I need to become successful in life outside of wrestling." Rodriguez's respected career has given him the ability to be an impactful leader on the team as he sits with a 27-4 individual record. Rodriguez believes in order for the team to reach max potential, they must hold each other accountable and push each other on and off the mat. He believes it's imperative for the team to have fun without letting doubt or fear take over. It's the mental part of things and having a positive mindset that'll have us where we want to be. Although the team's starters are recording great seasons,

some even marking in the national rankings, Legacy has been particularly pleased with the non-starters on the team. Legacy believes they've been the hidden key to a lot of the success this season. "The people I'd like to recognize are the non-starters because they push the starters every day in practice," Legacy said. "You're only as good as the guy in front of you and the guy behind you and because our guys are so engaged it has given the team a training mindset where each kid believes they can achieve and reach high goals no matter who they are. These guys know where they are because we all do mindset scenarios with each

other. It encourages them to feed off one another while embracing the journey and whatever comes with it." Graduate assistant Ryan Foutz has worked closely with non-starters this season and he's been impressed with their development as wrestlers and his development as a first-time wrestling coach. "Being able to watch guys improve has been my favorite part about coaching this season. I've been with the non-starters more so seeing those guys go from not placing at tournaments to now doing good things at tournaments has been great," Foutz said. "Seeing the intensity in a room of all the guys doing what they

need to do has been fun as we are working hard to improve." As a first-time coach, Foutz said he's learned how to connect with the guys on the team, how to manage events, how to operate a college practice. Foutz, being a former wrestler, understands each athlete is here for a common goal but how you coach them is different. "The most important thing I've learned here is keeping the culture going for everyone, so it's been important for me to learn how to handle each guy because everyone's different," Foutz said. "It's my job to guide them in the right direction while still understanding the individual I'm coaching." Foutz does his best to develop positive relationships with the guys while maintaining a healthy player-coach bond. "Most of my conversations with the guys are about business because part of my job is to talk about what makes them better as wrestlers," Foutz said. "Not everything is completely professional. Outside of the room, I try to joke around and have fun, but balancing the authority part is important to me and I believe the guys understand and respect that." Foutz is aspiring to become a head coach of a college wrestling program. He believes to achieve that is by working his way up in the coaching ranks. As the team pushes into the home stretch of the season, Legacy and the team are looking to finish strong. They've put an emphasis on their conditioning, doing more live wrestling, but also keeping it loose by getting into fun practices. Legacy believes this process will allow them to find their strengths and weaknesses and ultimately mold each wrestler into what it takes to win.

Spartans punch their ticket to playoffs



CASTLETONSPORTS
Alex Johnson in warm ups ahead of her two goal game on Pink the Rink night.

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The Spartans women's hockey team is headed to the playoffs! Within the team, expectations were high for the season. This being their lowest playoff seeding in the last three years, 7th place in the conference, was not their hope. But, they have a ticket to the dance. The time is now to get up and perform. They will be facing off with Elmira on Saturday on the road. They clinched their playoff spot with two wins over New England College on Feb. 7-8 at home. The first of their 4-2 wins started with a dominant first period where the Saprtans carried the play decisively despite going down 1-0 in the last minute of the period. They broke through in the second period with three unanswered. Rachel McNeil started the girls off with a big tying goal assisted by Rainey Lay, and Moa Carlsson. Senior forward Codi Bacon followed up with a goal to take the lead just two minutes later.

Senior defenceman Emery Bonner tallied a third on the powerplay halfway through the second. The women continued to dominate the game but gave up a second goal late in the second period. Moa Carlsson scored a third period insurance marker to put the game away. The Spartan's second game of the weekend with NEC went similarly, The Spartans took an early lead with a goal from Moa Carlsson, assisted by Alex Johnson, just over five minutes into the first period. Annika Nelson extended the lead before the first intermission. Despite a strong effort from the Pilgrims, Castleton maintained their advantage, improving to a 7-8-1 record in New England Hockey Conference play. This past weekend, the team hosted Elmira College for two significant matchups. The first game on Friday, Feb. 14, was particularly special as it marked the 16th annual "Pink the Rink" event, dedicated to raising funds for the Breast Care Program at Rutland Regional Medical Center's Foley Cancer Center. Over the years, this event has garnered immense sup-

port, with the team contributing more than \$100,000 to the cause. The final score of this one was a slightly disappointing 6-2 loss in front of the home crowd. The following day, Saturday, Feb. 15, the teams faced off again at Spartan Arena. Again, a special occasion as it was senior night for the Spartans. Led by Captain Emery Bonner, Alex Johnson, Victoria Bakopanos, and Codi Bacon make up the senior class. When asked to speak on what this game and day means to her, Bacon had this say. "Being able to celebrate the end of our hockey careers was really special for us, especially having our families around to accompany us. Being a part of this team is one of the greatest experiences I have had in college and I wouldn't have it any other way," she said. For these seniors, unfortunately this game will be the last of theirs played in Spartan Arena, "Spartan Arena has been a home for us as hockey players during our time here, and a place for our community to gather. Not just as student-

athletes and a team, but the fans and supporters that create such a wonderful atmosphere as well as as much a part of that. It has been a privilege to play in this rink and in front of these people. I will miss that privilege a lot," said Victoria Bakopanos about her last game in the Spartan Arena. The game was somewhat disastrous itself and resulted in a 9-0 loss. Let's hope the girls were sandbagging Elmira in anticipation of their playoff meeting next weekend. Not the game most would like to end their college careers on at home. However, when speaking to Assistant Captain Meg Aiken she shared optimism. "We know we can be better than that. We have stayed in it with teams better than them all year long. I would really love it if we could extend the seniors careers here as spartans one game at a time. They've done so much for me, I'd like if we did something for them," Aiken said.

How Karl Marx made me a Capitalist

Karl Marx once wrote, “The less you are and the less you express your life, the more you have and the greater is your alienated life.”

Basically, my man was saying, “Congrats on all your stuff, but your soul is on back-order.” He went on to describe how, under capitalism, the less you go to the theater, engage in art, or cultivate yourself intellectually, the more you accumulate wealth, but at what cost?

Today, that quote hits harder than a 7 a.m. Monday morning wake up call for a lecture in Leavenworth. Late-stage capitalism has hollowed out the depth of human experience, swapping curiosity for consumption, engagement for efficiency, and individuality for algorithmic predictability. Am I being dramatic?

Our economic system, once an engine of opportunity, has become a self-perpetuating machine that rewards the few at the expense of the many. It’s no longer just about wealth inequality – it’s about how capitalism has curated our reality itself. The system doesn’t just control what you buy; it controls how you think, what you see, and what you value.

And it’s working, because we seemingly forget what the human experience once was. It’s like The Truman Show, except Truman is in his pajamas, endlessly scrolling TikTok.

Social media algorithms, 24-hour news cycles, and corporate monopolies all function as part of a larger mechanism designed to keep the population passive and overwhelmed with information. The world is burning; economically, politically, and literally in some places.

Despite that, the only thing that trends is the latest celebrity scandal and hot girls dancing on a boat.

People are scrolling, but they aren’t searching.

Capitalism has always depended on keeping people distracted, but the efficiency with which it does so now is unparalleled. The only thing it asks of you is complacency – oh, and \$9.99 a month for the premium version.

And it’s not just about politics. The culture of efficiency has stripped people of curiosity itself. We live in a world where convenience is king.

Why go out and experience life when an app can bring it to your doorstep? Why seek out new perspectives when the algorithm already knows what you like? Kurt Vonnegut had a lovely story about buying one envelope at a time instead of a whole box like his wife suggested. He did it not because it was practical, but because it forced him to interact with the world. He left his house to have conversations, to observe, to experience. He engaged with his community, and it gave him a chance for adventure every time he sent

a letter.

Beauty in the mundane.

But in a society optimized for speed, taking the long road is no longer even an option. I mean, who has the time? There’s a new season of your favorite show dropping at midnight and the pretty blonde you follow posted a dump in Dubai.

I recently had a conversation with a friend who proposed a rather optimistic take on AI and capitalism. His theory was that as automation drives down production costs, corporations would eventually sell products so cheaply that we’d all waltz into a utopia, paying pennies for life’s necessities, thus justifying that capitalism drove growth to the point of utopia. The idea being, once companies don’t have to pay pesky things like labor costs, they’d shower us with generosity.

I’m oversimplifying here, and allowing my scepticism to sway the tone, but alas. It’s a beautiful thought, like picturing Jeff Bezos running a non-profit daycare. The idea relies on the assumption that corporations would prioritize public good over profits. Given the track record, expecting that kind of benevolence feels like waiting for a wolf to go vegan.

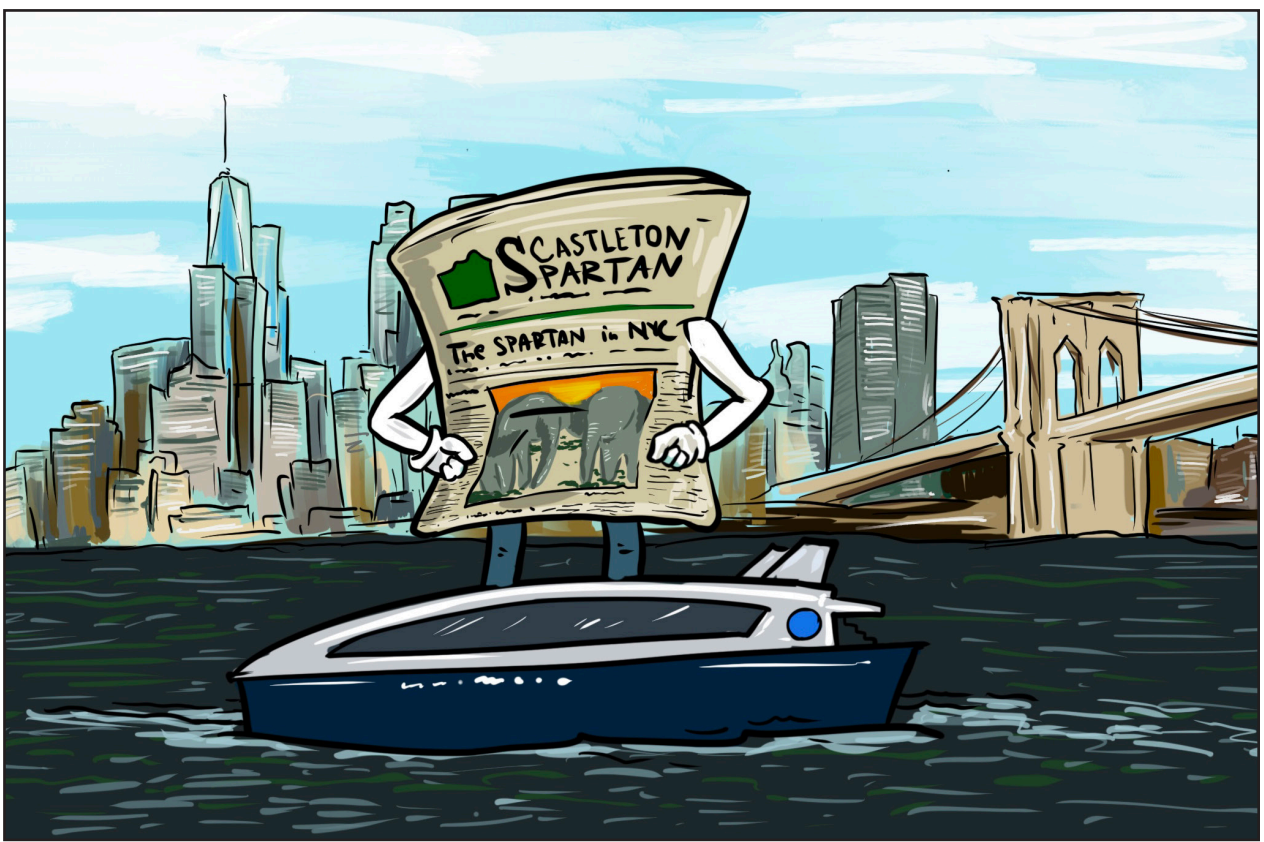
If anything, history shows us that the more efficient capitalism becomes, the more it tightens its grip on profits and the less it shares with the masses. Sure, production might get cheaper, but that doesn’t mean life will.

But fulfillment doesn’t come from consumption – it comes from curiosity. And that is exactly what this system has worked so hard to suppress. But Christ, if I say I’m a socialist it’s like I just said death to America.

Breaking out of this cycle isn’t easy. It’s a personal battle against attention span, dopamine addiction, and the constant pull of passive consumption. It takes time and intentionality. Read more fiction. Seek out art outside of your algorithm. Take the long way home, not because it’s practical, but because it reminds you that you are not a machine. The goal isn’t to escape capitalism overnight – that’s a fantasy. The goal is to reclaim your ability to choose, to resist the default setting. Marx was right: the less you go to the theater, the less you engage with the world, the more capitalism wins. The only question now is whether we let it.

My last note I will leave you with is a quote from Mark Fisher, “It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”

- Jackson Edwards



JOE VYVIAL

Guest Essay:

Poli Sci professor discusses democracy and education

*“Don’t it always seem to go
That you don’t know what
you got ‘til it’s gone?”*

--Joni Mitchell, Big Yellow Taxi

MAGA Republicans have blamed the collapse of our institutions on so-called “elites” who control the arts and sciences and who look down on the average American. In this view, experts are supporting the institutions that oppress Americans through regulations, social engineering, and policing thought and language. Education itself has become a target.

Wealthy capitalists, along with much of the capitalist workforce, become the victims in this scenario where the elite are the “woke” (people who recognize a history of social injustice), the educated (people who believe that science is the best method for understanding social and natural phenomena) and the deep state (dedicated civil servants with expertise in a wide array of fields).

In addition to the attack on the educated, there has been a concerted attack on facts, the shared understanding of our current reality.

The Trump administration has told the world that Ukraine, which was invaded by an aggressively belligerent Russia, started the war, and Vladimir Putin who has had his political opponents murdered or jailed is a good leader. The President has said that the insurrection of January 6, 2021—the violence of which we watched in real time as law enforcement officers were attacked and beaten—was a day of patriotic and peaceful protest. Mr. Trump maintains that the 2020 election was stolen from him despite countless



Rich Clark

evidence that Biden won fairly, and he claims that he won the 2024 presidential election in a landslide despite it being the closest election in terms of popular vote since the 2000 contest between Bush and Gore. Among hundreds of other dubious claims, President Trump has asserted that the wildfires that devastated California and the mid-air collision of a passenger plane and an Army helicopter were the result of DEI policies.

It is not coincidental that our democracy is in peril at the same time that what Kellyanne Conway called “alternative facts” are more prevalent in public discourse than at any other time in modern American history. [“Alternative facts” exacerbated the COVID pandemic resulting in more deaths, and led to the January 6th insurrection.]

America’s founders were far from perfect individuals, but they largely shared a foundation in the Enlightenment that believed that science and reason would bring about good public policy and that the purpose of government was to protect individuals’ rights while pursuing the general public good—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Republic that the founders built was an unfinished product, meant to grow and change with the needs of the people—thus Article V of

the Constitution providing the means to alter the supreme law. But Article V created a process that required broad support for amendments; the Constitution could not be changed on a whim or in response to momentary passions.

Our founders built a system that is meant to move slowly; democracy is not efficient by design. An old proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, to together.” Democracy is built to go far, not fast. Elon Musk’s belief in “move fast and break things” is not a formula for a democracy; it’s a formula for chaos that in the short term may boost the market value of a tech company but won’t build a long-term, stable institution. The purposes of government and the purposes of tech companies are far too different to apply the same organizational ethos.

For many Americans, democracy has failed to bring about the conditions that they seek, and for other Americans, we are still striving to make democracy real. Some would have us go back to an earlier point in history for some imagined American greatness, and others would have us move forward into the unknown in search of that “more perfect union.” America is in a perpetual state of becoming, and for many the societal changes that are inherent in having no clear destiny is unsettling. The political tension in America pivots on whether to abandon our systems of democracy or to embrace democracy more fully.

While I still believe that what Americans share in common far exceeds what divides us, it is critical that we return to a shared foundation for debate, based on empirical facts

and an understanding that the scientific method is more often than not the best means for understanding our reality. Just as a modern economy needs an educated workforce, democracy needs an educated citizenry. While education is certainly no measure of an individual’s moral worth, those without the critical thinking skills that are developed through higher education are more susceptible to lies and conspiracy theories and less amenable to reasoned arguments.

Neither liberals nor conservatives, neither Republicans nor Democrats, neither the MAGA movement nor the resistance, have a lock on reason and truth. But the surest path to reason and truth is through education, and we cannot afford to become a less-educated society if we want to retain our democracy.

To be clear, democracy is in peril today. To employ the title of Astra Taylor’s book for my purposes: Democracy May Not Exist, but We’ll Miss It When It’s Gone. While we may not have a perfect democracy, the path to a “more perfect union” aspired to in our Constitution is in jeopardy. I still believe, like Churchill, that democracy is the worst form of government, except for every other form.

There is no silver bullet to solve the problems America faces, but education is the closest thing we have. That’s why successful authoritarians always attack and then control the system of education; it’s the greatest challenge to their power. And it’s the greatest weapon for democracy.

--Rich Clark, Professor of Political Science at VTSU-Castleton

My journey from Africa to VTSU

It was around 4:30 to 5 p.m. when I was at a local spot with my friends, playing and showing off a new skirt my dad had bought for me. I was 12 or 13 at the time, carefree and laughing, until my aunt started calling my name in a panic.

“Faida! Faida!”

I knew something was wrong when I saw her face, flushed and red as though she had been crying.

She screamed at me, “WHAT KIND OF DAUGHTER ARE YOU?”

Confused and nervous, I asked what she meant, but before I could understand, someone else yelled that my dad was dying.

My heart dropped, and a wave of panic hit me.

For some reason, my first thought was that my mom had died. I ran in a daze until I found myself at the hospital. My dad was lying there, looking strangely taller than usual. I refused to go in, unable to see him that way.

It wasn’t until my mom called to reassure me that he wasn’t dead that I felt a flicker of relief, but I still cried, overwhelmed by fear and confusion.

Months later, in July 2018, a woman came to our door, asking where my mom was.

I told her she was at work, and the woman seemed

shocked. She then told me that my mom had lost her husband in Congo.

He had been poisoned days before and went to a hospital in Congo, a couple hours away from their Burundi home, for treatment. But they were unable to treat him.

I froze in disbelief.

“I broke down, not knowing how to process the loss of the only friend I had ever known.”
- Faida Shukuru

I had just spoken to my dad days earlier, and he had seemed fine. I ran to my mom’s working place, but she wasn’t there.

When I finally found her, she was crying, and at that moment, I instantly knew what had happened.

My dad had died, and it felt like the ground beneath me had disappeared.

When I arrived at my aunt’s house, still in denial, she showed me a picture of my dad in a casket.

My world shattered.

I broke down, not knowing

how to process the loss of the only friend I had ever known. I couldn’t believe it—I didn’t want to believe it. Even though we tried to attend the funeral, delays meant we missed it. I felt like I was living in a nightmare, desperately hoping I would wake up.

By the time we arrived in Congo, I still clung to the hope that it wasn’t true. But when I saw my dad’s picture hanging on a mango tree, surrounded by mourners, my heart sank.

I broke down in tears, feeling like my entire world had fallen apart. My dad was gone, and I didn’t know how to cope. He had been my only friend, the one person who truly cared for me.

I felt lost, numb, and empty. My ul broke down, not knowing how to process the loss of the only friend I had ever known. ncle tried to comfort me, repeating that it was okay, that my dad might be gone, but he was there for me.

Yet, I couldn’t hear him. After the funeral, everything changed. My mom, now a single mother of seven, was left to raise us without help. Moving to the U.S. seemed like the fresh start we needed, but the challenges of adjusting were overwhelming.

Learning a new language and meeting new people was difficult, yet at the same time,

it wasn’t as bad as I had feared. The first couple of weeks here, I felt homesick. I wanted to go back because this place felt very strange. I didn’t know how to feel. I was excited, but also uncertain.

One time, my mom sent me to a store to get something for her. At first, I refused because I don’t speak the language.

“How am I supposed to ask the cashier?” I thought.

My mom responded, “How are you supposed to learn the language if you don’t talk to people?”

She had a point, so I went to the store. Just as I feared, an employee asked if I needed help. I was nervous and said, “No English.” However, the employee was really nice and didn’t mind. I don’t remember what else she said to me, but somehow she managed to help me.

Asked about the move five years ago, my mother said, “I’m glad we came. I don’t know how I could’ve done it back home because I did not have any support.”

Looking back, I’m glad we moved here too. Because of this opportunity, I am now in university—something I don’t think I could have accomplished if I had stayed back home.

- Faida Shukuru

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Maddie Lindgren

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Jess Emery

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Gabby Blanchard

Reporters
Gabby Blanchard
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Stone Stelzl

Page Designers
Joe Vyvial
Pearl Bellomo
Maddie Lindgren
Emily Ely
Stone Stelzl
Gabby Blanchard

Photographer
Avery Bouchard

Advisor
David Blow

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Shamrocks & sunshine

By Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

The first signs of spring have started to appear on campus, giving students the reassurance that warmer weather is underway. The most significant event has been the reappearance of Castleton's beloved "campus cat," Max. The news made its way to the social media platform YikYak, with one user commenting, "The world is healing."

Although said with humorous intent, it's obvious Max's presence has been much anticipated.

St. Patrick's Day decor can also be found around campus this time of year. In years past, campus has erupted in green and partying to celebrate the holiday. However, it seems the turnout of any functions this year will be much more reserved compared to past celebrations.

The majority of students asked said they have little to no plans surrounding St. Patty's. But some are looking forward to it.

"I've really never celebrated or gone to any of the darts because it's always been during tech week for me. It'll be fun to actually see what's going on, if anything," said Emerson Jolliffe, an active member of Castleton's theater department.

Many students reminisce on the St. Patrick's Day traditions from childhood. A common experience students share is the tradition of a leprechaun "breaking into" classrooms while students are away. Students recall chairs being tipped over, glitter and gold coins left astray, and even making traps in an effort to catch a leprechaun.

While some were entertained by the playful chaos, others were left somewhat unsettled.

"When the classroom got trashed, I would cry," said Emily Ely.

In fact, Ely recalls she had to be picked up from school. She has optimistic anticipation for the holiday this year and is looking forward to celebrating. Fellow student Ebbie Borgia had a positive experience with the tradition.

"I loved it. I thought it was magical," she said.

St. Patrick's Day originates from honoring the patron saint of Ireland. Borgia, along with her peers, are traveling to the emerald isle at the end of this semester. They held a bake sale to help fund their travels earlier this week.

Tim Keeler is another student participating in the Ireland trip. He's looking forward to sightseeing the most.

See St. Patty's on page 6

Success in the big city

Castleton Spartan wins second place for "Best Newspaper" at the NYC College Media Association

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

The annual College Media Association conference trip to New York City was filled with many highs, some lows (only for playing the game purposes) and lots of buffaloes for the group of nine Spartan newspaper students and Communications professor Dave Blow.

Their journey began at 5:45 a.m. on a Thursday morning, followed by a four-and-a-half-hour ride into the Big Apple.

On night one of the trip, while sitting around a table at the "Perfect Pint" Irish pub, Web Editor and student Jessica Emery suggested the high-low-buffalo game and shared details of day, along with a fun random story – A.K.A. a buffalo.

Others then followed with their highs, lows and buffaloes from the day too. By the end of the three-day trip, the group had more buffalos than they could count.

And it was another strong year for the Spartan as it won second place in the 2025 "Best Newspaper" Apple Awards category for Division III.

This marked the seventh national award for the Spartan since 2017. For four out of the nine students, it was their first time attending the C.M.A. conference.

"I haven't even been to New York City before, so it was honestly just a really good opportunity and I made a lot of career connections, as well as friendships that left me fulfilled and happy," Copy Editor Emily Ely said.

Sportswriter Lauren Fotter was also a first-time attendee of the trip, and even though she does not plan to go into journalism, she gained a lot of new information from a variety of people that she can use in her future career.

Jackson Edwards, who writes opinion pieces and sports stories, said he liked the ability to network at the conference.

"I was really impressed by the engagement from all the students, including our own. It wasn't just sitting down and listening to someone smart, it was intelligent students engaging with people who work in a field that they are inspired to be in, and it was just inspiring on all counts," he said.

A highlight of the trip for some was getting the opportunity to speak in front of a large group of people on two different occasions.

The first came when Blow and students Gabby Blanchard and Maddie Lindgren spoke during a panel touting their efforts producing community journalism through the Center for Community News.

"I loved seeing how interested the audience seemed to be while they asked us questions after we were asked up," Blow said. "I was just very proud to stand in front of a



Nine Castleton Spartan newspaper staff members attended the College Media Association conference that included, participating in scholarly sessions, unforgettable views and forever memories.

room with students and tout what we are doing, because I am very proud of what we are doing. And then Em asking a question at the keynote was really neat as well. I didn't know she was going to do it then all a sudden, I see her with a microphone in her hand."

Ely said she really enjoyed getting the opportunity to ask the speaker, Sree Sreenivasan, a question in front of the big crowd during the "What AI will really mean for media jobs" keynote session.

"I could tell he was very knowledgeable about the subject, and I appreciated how honest he was," Ely said.

The conference offers a

large variety of sessions throughout the three days of the trip, allowing students to make connections and learn more about media.

"I made a great connection with a journalist, Emily Bloch, who has written for Teen Vogue and Cosmopolitan, so I reached out," Emery said.

Emery shared how Blow had texted her separately after he had met Bloch himself, and explained how he was telling the Philadelphia Inquirer journalist about the work Emery has done. Bloch was very impressed, and it led to her responding to Emery with future plans to chat.

"It's so inspiring to see

people accomplishing what I want to do because Castleton doesn't see a lot of pop culture stories so it is really cool meeting other people who can show me that there is something out there for me," Emery said.

Previous managing editor of the Spartan, Peal Bellomo, said that her favorite presentation was from Mark Simon, the host of the Journalism Salute podcast. He played excerpts from some of his favorite episodes and lessons learned from those journalists. She thought the concept was really cool and unique and plans on listening to the podcast herself.

Sports editor Stone Stelzl also found inspiration during

the conference.

"It is really cool to hear people in the field of journalism talk about something I am passionate about and give tips I can use towards my career in the future," he said.

The Spartans left many impressions in New York this year, including from Ely who, as a way to receive more professional connections, made personal business cards to hand out to speakers at the event.

See N.Y.C on page 6

The untold truths about student cars



JOE VYVIAL

By Bruce T. Waite
Spartan Contributor

Workers at Hurlburt's Auto in Castleton have seen a lot over their 20-plus years working on student vehicles.

From brakes literally falling off the car when they remove tires to so much trash and clothes piled up they practi-

cally had to dig it out to do anything inside, Bub Hurlburt and Trevor Hurlburt aren't surprised by much.

Asked if they have ever had any interesting finds inside the vehicles, Trevor said without hesitation and with a grin, "Besides condoms, underwear, liquor, and pot?"

He followed his comment closely with a hearty laugh.

Mechanics and local auto parts store officials say a lack of routine maintenance leads to many more issues with student cars down the road that sometimes leaves them on the side of the road. Letting these vehicles sit while on campus does not help, and is one of the worst things to do, the mechanics said.

Alex Lasante, a seven-year

parts employee who has been at O'Reilly's in Castleton for about seven months, mentioned a few things that students always replace or buy.

"Most issues are from sitting for a month at a time over there," Lasante said, later mentioning that batteries and bulbs are the most common replacement parts for students.

Not everything mechanics and auto parts sales officials deal with is routine, and the longer you're in the business, the more out-of-the-ordinary things you tend to encounter, they say.

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"I had to put a heater core in a Jeep...he had a slight drug problem. A bundle of heroin fell out with a bunch of cups..." Trevor Hurlburt said of a Jeep Liberty – which the student then said was his mother's.

And some cars apparently resemble dorm rooms or bedrooms.

"We've had cars come in for dash work, and there's so much garbage on the floor you can't even get under it without cleaning it. Without throwing it all out all over the shop floor," Trevor said.

Lasante said he had seen the same.

"Some cars come in, and we have to find what they need for parts or check dash lights, and you can only see the driver's seat. There's so much garbage sometimes," he said.

AR-Automotive, directly across from Hurlbert's, has had similar experiences. Randy Dydo and Aaron Cassidy run the shop and shared similar stories concerning student vehicles.

Cassidy mentioned that the smell of "pot" seemed to be a theme among many student vehicles, and he wasn't a fan of working on them when they reeked of it.

See Cars on page 6

Tattoo of the week

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

Tattoos are not just body ink for Tylik Epps, a VTSU Castleton student and leader of the wrestling team.

For Epps, the tattoo on his bicep is a tribute to the greatest woman in his life: his mother. In late August of 2020, right before the beginning of his freshman year of college, Epps got a tattoo of an elephant, an animal known to be strong and protective of their family.

“My mom always had a thing for elephants,” Epps said. “She even claims it’s her spirit animal.”

Appreciation is not the only motivation for the tattoo, Epps said. Elephants carry their calves in the womb for an astonishing 22 whole months, a whole 13 months longer than a human.

This also links back to Epps’ mother because he feels as

though the process his mother and elephants go through carrying and protecting their offspring in the womb is very important, inspiring this tattoo.

“This tattoo is to show how powerful she is, like an elephant,” Epps said.

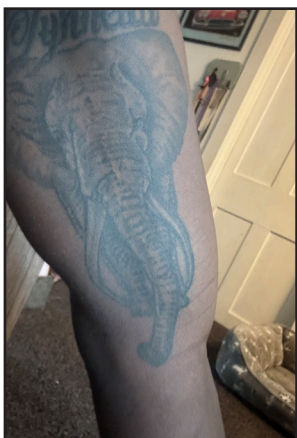
The design of the tattoo is meant to depict the elephant’s strength, and for Epps, it is a way for him to remember the love and strength that his mother has in his life.

Diving a little deeper into the meaning of the tattoo, Epps also explained how it also acts as motivation for him.

As one of the captains of the wrestling team, Epps channels his elephant’s spirit to help him find inner strength to overcome any challenge put in front of him.

He feels the tattoo also helps give him energy and motivation during his workouts, practices, team lifts, and overall, through his daily life.

“I look at it sometimes, and



COURTESY TYLIK EPPS
A close up photo of Epps elephant tattoo on his bicep.

it just reminds me of how much I love her and how she always has my back,” Epps said.

This is more than just an elephant tattoo for Epps; it is a symbol and a representation of the love he has for his mother and the unbreakable bond that they share.



COURTESY LUCAS DALFONSO
Tylik Epps proudly displays his elephant tattoo, a tribute to his mom, in VTSU Castleton’s wrestling team’s media day photo shoot.

Student tattoo artist: Rainey Skye

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

Imagine if you were drunk at a college party on a random Saturday night, and the party was packed to the brim, so you went to try and find refuge. You fight your way up a flight of stairs filled with drunk college students who seem to only know how to be in the way.

You finally make it up and turn left down the hallway so you can sneak into a random room hoping for a little peace while you try to recover. But no, instead you find a room that is just as packed as downstairs, and in the center of it all, is a woman giving people tattoos while being hyped up by a group of drunks.

Well, for some students at VTSU Castleton, this is a reality. VTSU student and women’s ice hockey player Rainey Skye turned Exit 5, a place once known for parties, into a place where you can get incredibly drunk and tattooed.

Skye was once the canvas as she has an astonishing 17 tattoos. Some of her favorites being the red smoke screen with two crosses on her right forearm, a red butterfly on her back, and “Love Yours” which is the name of one of J. Cole’s albums.

But she wasn’t the one getting them for much longer, as she turned her love for tattoos into a fun hobby of giving tattoos to anyone who would let her use them as the canvas.

“One day the hockey boys just told me to come over and bring my gun,” Skye said. “You know how the parties go, just random people show up and I will just be in one of the guy’s rooms and random people would just come in and out getting tattoos.”

VTSU student and men’s ice hockey player Josh Ward is a resident at Exit 5 and is not the biggest fan of tattoos but liked the idea.

“I thought it was a good opportunity for a young tattoo artist to get some experience and for the guys to get some tattoos,” Ward said.

One of Ward’s favorite memories of Skye giving tattoos was when she had given another VTSU student and member of the men’s hockey team, Jackson Edwards, a tattoo of the name of their house “Exit 5.”

“He got the tattoo as a memory of Rainey doing tattoos at our house and all the fun stories we have,” Ward explained.

“We were all supposed to get the tattoo but none of the guys did,” said Edwards.

One of Skye’s craziest stories was how one time in the spring semester of 2024, Rob Guerin a VTSU Castleton alum and former football player, had her come over to his house on Mechanic St. to put a “Jits” tattoo on him and 4 other guys.

“After I finished one of the guy’s tattoos, I told him to go get up and look at it and he just kept sitting there for a little bit,” Skye said.

Skye proceeded to warn him to not get up if he was feeling lightheaded, but he said “Nah, I’m good, I’m good.”

Skye explained he got up and walked to the kitchen to see his tattoo. “All of the sudden we heard a loud thump in the kitchen and the guys found him passed out on the floor.” Skye said.

Skye started tattooing for fun and does not charge anybody even though some people feel compelled to do so this is due to licensing issues.

She does not want to pursue that path and rather keep it as a fun hobby that can enjoy with her friends and continue to perfect her craft. Please check this week’s weather forecast because it seems like we will have some Rainey Skye’s this week.



COURTESY RAINERY SKYE
Rainey Skye shows one of her favorite tattoos red smoke with two crosses traveling up her right forearm, top, friends getting matching thigh tattoos, bottom left, and Edwards “Exit 5” tattoo.

Chatting with the bluegrass boys



COURTESY PHOTO
Band members Sam Merwin, Micah Stevenson, Zenon Stevenson, and Mark Stevenson, perform a tune.

By Dean Dugan
Spartan Contributor

The Blue Cat Bistro was loud on a recent Friday with the sounds of The Bird Mountain String Band as they tuned and tested their instruments.

The waitresses scurried around through the dark room to drop off the food to the patient patrons who were there to watch the bluegrass band play.

The Bird Mountain String Band is a small bluegrass band composed of family members Zenon Stevenson on banjo, Micah Stevenson on guitar, Adam Stevenson on guitar and family friend Sam Merwin on the bass.

Merwin, when asked, describes bluegrass as “mountain jazz.”

The youngest band member, Micah Stevenson, said, “It [bluegrass] is made of simple, progressive, tight sounds.” He looked around, speaking over the crowd noise and band’s tuning sounds to ask his brother if he had a better way to describe it.

Adam Stevenson is the father of Micah and Zenon and one of the band’s guitar players.

“I’d tell them it’s string music with no drums ... It’s Appalachian Mountain music,

and it’s very cohesive,” he said while taking a few sips of his beer.

Donald Willie is another bluegrass player who was at the Blue Cat Bistro on that Friday to watch the band play. When asked if he had come to see the band, he mistakenly took this reporter for a waiter and said another waiter had already taken his order. After a quick explanation, he started talking about bluegrass.

“Bluegrass was the beginning of the country music,” Willie said through a chuckle.

Willie has played with the Blue Mountain String Band at local jams. He joined the bluegrass community a few years ago when he was gifted a guitar for Christmas.

Since then, he has been an active part of the community.

Zenon, an Early College student at VTSU Castleton, described the bluegrass community as “tightknit.”

Merwin took it a step further.

“Everyone has their group activities; this just happens to be ours,” he said.

The players said the bluegrass community is open and has many fundamental songs everyone knows. Zenon says that sometimes you play with people you’ve never met before.

Willie agreed and said that makes it fun.

“Sometimes, as I walk through and hear a song I like, I see if I can hop in,” Willie said.

He said most of the time, people are okay with that.

Zenon and Micah had grown up listening to bluegrass in the Stevenson house, but during COVID, they had become “obsessed” with it. That obsession led to the formation of the band.

Adam feels a strong connection to bluegrass for a few reasons. He played in a bluegrass band in college, has always listened to it, and he lives on a farm. He feels that the songs often touched on and reflected his life on the farm.

Zenon says he makes time to practice for around two hours daily, even with his school schedule.

“I feed off of people who are better,” Zenon said.

In addition to playing the Bluecat Bistro, the band plays at the Poultney Pub bluegrass jams every Tuesday from 7-10 pm. Zenon states that they’ve never played a “real big gig.”

Bluegrass has played a massive part in the lives of the band members, and Willie’s too.

“This music, these guys, changed my life,” Willie said.

Connecting with him through songs

By Ari Cartwright
Castleton Spartan

My siblings and I had an eventful childhood to say the least and through tough times, we navigated our emotions through music making together.

Music has always been my outlet. Writing songs, especially with my sibling truly takes me to a different world. I personally have a really hard time verbally communicating my emotions, but it comes so easily to me through writing.

I can't always rely on other people to talk to when I'm having a hard time, but I can always pick up my guitar.

My siblings and I share very similar values, yet they differ in many ways. Songwriting together is one of our strongest connections we hold and has been since we were little. It is

the one thing that has remained constant throughout our childhood and early adulthood, even after undergoing so many changes in our lives.

My brother Sawyer and I are identical twins.

I realize that could cause some confusion, so I'd like to prerequisite this by telling you he is a trans man (and I am very proud of him).

I thought that making music with him through his transition would be tricky, but it's been nothing but a beautiful experience. And Sawyer is enjoying it too.

"I'd say the biggest challenge as a trans man is relearning how to sing in a lower register. I've always had an alto voice, so I wouldn't say it's particularly hard. As my voice changes, I might find more challenges, but as of right now, I am still pretty happy with how my voice is evolving."

At a very young age, Sawyer and I realized we were musically inclined. I spent hours with drums sticks I got from a game for the Wii banging on my Lisa Frank jewelry box making beats.

One time, when we were about 10 years old, one of our favorite pizza places hosted an open mic night. I was too nervous to perform, but surely enough, Sawyer walked his tiny self up to the stage and sang "Ho Hey" by The Lumineers.

He was so proud of himself.

When talking to Sawyer about old silly memories like that, he reminisced.

"I remember mom posting a video of Ari, singing their first original song "Stars in the Sky" when they were about 6 or 7 years old. I remember thinking it was so cool that I even got a little jealous. After that, we started having competitions to



COURTESY ARI CARTWRIGHT

Ari Cartwright plays the guitar and sings with her twin brother Sawyer.

see who could write the better song.

Since then, we have made so many songs together.

To be clear, he always makes the "better song."

Music is medicine.

Even if I'm not feeling up to making anything of my own, I can always listen to the masterpieces of other creators. It's not just playing music that makes us happy. Listening to music is just as healing and I hope to

make music that can help other people get through anything they may endure.

And I hope that my brother and I can share our experience to both educate and bring others happiness to others.

Suprises and snubs at the Oscars

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

On Sunday night, March 2, those interested pop culture and movies popped their popcorn, poured their glasses of wine and geared up to watch the 2025 Oscars.

For those who maybe aren't so in tune with movies and pop culture, here's the gist.

There were a few memorable films nominated for Best Picture including "Anora," "The Brutalist," "A Complete Unknown," "Conclave," "Dune: Part Two," "Emelia Pérez," "I'm Still Here," "Nickel Boys," "The Substance" and "Wicked."

These films pretty much took the cake for the rest of the category nominations as well.

Timothée Chalamet, the star of "A Complete Unknown," the highly anticipated Bob Dylan biopic, was nominated for Best Actor.

"My most anticipated category was best actor. I was rooting for Timothée Chalamet, and I thought it was so cool how he campaigned by being the musical guest on SNL and singing Dylan songs," said VTSU Castleton student Genna Hurley

Chalamet spent around five years working on this film. It is also widely known that he went without using a cell phone for some months to be able to unplug and allow himself to be more in tune with his character.

A lot of people, including Hurley, thought he deserved to win because of his dedication.

However, Adrien Brody won for his performance in "The Brutalist."

The Brutalist follows an architect who is a refugee, making his way to the United States.

"I thought Adrien Brody was definitely a strong contender, but I thought the AI situation might have made a difference," Hurley continued.

There was some controversy around Brody's performance because it is known that the performance was enhanced



Oscar winners shown posing with their trophies, from left to right: Adrien Brody, Mickey Madison, Zoe Saldana, and Kieran Culkin.



using Artificial Intelligence. AI was used to improve their pronunciation of Hungarian dialogue.

Hurley wasn't the only one disappointed that Timothée Chalamet didn't win.

"I was really looking forward for best actor because of Timothée. I really thought he had that one in the bag. I was so bummed he didn't win it," said fellow VTSU Castleton student Madelyn Nonni.

For Best Picture, another highly anticipated category, "Anora" won.

Anora follows a young stripper who marries the son

of a wealthy Russian oligarch and the film explores the nuanced portrayal of the sex work industry.

But many people thought "Wicked" was definitely going to win.

"I personally think Wicked should have won best picture because it was much more popular and well liked than Anora," VTSU Castleton student Camille Pontius said.

Although Hurley agrees that "Wicked" was good, she has a different understanding of why it didn't win Best Picture.

"I haven't seen "Anora" yet, but I did see "Wicked" and I

thought it was pretty good. I am not too surprised that "Wicked" didn't win best picture because it was originally a musical, but I was surprised that it was "Anora" that won," she said.

"I am glad that "Wicked" won the awards that it did and would have liked to see Cynthia Erivo win best actress," Hurley continued.

"Wicked" has received a lot of praise throughout award season, but some were upset that the only awards they took home for the Oscars was for Best Costume Design and Best Production Design.

"I think "Anora" is so good, but I really liked "Wicked." I thought there was no way anyone else would win Best Picture. "Wicked" was definitely snubbed the whole show," Nonni said.

Some Castleton students were shocked as actors and actresses unexpectedly won.

"I was pleasantly surprised that Kieran Culkin won best supporting actor for "A Real Pain, I think he's such a fun person and a good actor but didn't know if he would win because that movie wasn't as big as some of the other films actors were nominated for,"

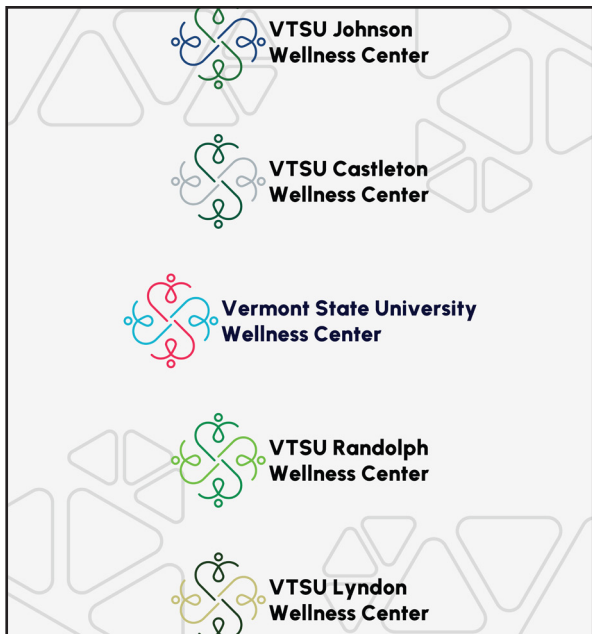
Hurley said.

"A Real Pain" is comedy following a cousin duo that meets up in Poland to honor their grandmother.

Zoe Saldana won Best Supporting Actress for her performance in "Emelia Pérez."

The film is about a Mexican lawyer who helps a high-profile drug cartel transition into a woman.

"I was not expecting Zoe Saldana to win best supporting actress. I think Ariana should have won because I believe her performance was much more impactful than Zoe's," Nonni said.



Graphic design student Dominic Trevisani shows his design process of creating a new logo for The Wellness Center; aiming to unite all four VTSU campuses.

New Wellness branding unites VTSU campuses

By Dominic Trevisani
Spartan Contributor

Last semester, the VTSU Wellness Center came to my Branding and Packaging class, asking for a new logo and identity. I took this as an opportunity to find a way to do what the VTSU merger failed to do: unify the campuses while re-

taining their own unique identities.

While I knew I had to stay within the VTSU branding guide, I took the opportunity to take the colors from each of the old colleges and bring them back in a new way. I wanted to include some way of representing four individual things coming together, the motif of a heart and people, both being

crucial themes across wellness, and loosely connecting that to nature with a plant-like shape, as that seemed to be a common theme in my research to signify growth.

Something I felt that was missing from the VTSU branding was the meaning of the four main colleges coming together. You could make the argument that there are three main moun-

tains in the VTSU logo, which could represent NVU, VTC, and Castleton, but I feel like that doesn't capture the true spirit behind the college.

To me, it seems like there was a complete dismissal of the previous colleges' brandings moving into VTSU, seemingly wanting to leave its predecessors' legacy behind. This is something I feel strongly

about, and I took this opportunity to amend that the best I could.

I feel like I wasn't just able to capture the mission behind the Wellness Center with this, but was also able to bring back much needed identity to this school. The reason that this project resonated with me was because I felt VTSU's branding missed the mark and isn't

true to its roots, and this gave me a means to right that wrong.

While the Wellness Center is just a small part of VTSU as a whole, I'm happy I was able to leave my mark on this school, and by doing so, was able to bring some much-needed unity to it as well.

DEI:



David Bergh

Continued from page 1

“In a recent document, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights confirmed that non-discriminatory diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, and educational, cultural, or historical observances are not in and of themselves illegal, and to our knowledge, everything we have done and plan to do at VTSU is legal and constitutional.”

Yoon also noted that our future responses will depend on any future developments. But he remains hopeful and positive.

“I think it is also important to note that if the law changes, our response to those changes will depend on those specific changes,” he said.

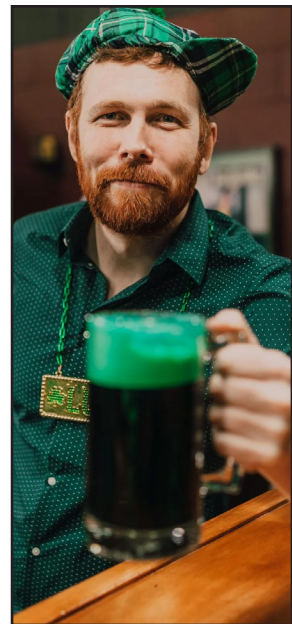
“I am grateful for President Bergh’s leadership on these issues. His calm, measured, and rational approach to this rapidly evolving situation continues to be a bright spot for me.”

Bergh gave further information about what exactly is prohibited according to the administration.

“What is prohibited are activities or policies that discriminate against specific groups or individuals, under the auspices of DEI work or otherwise,” he explained. “Our offerings, programming, and organizations are open to all and do not discriminate.”

Bergh addressed the concerns regarding the dismemberment of DEI offices in other institutions as well, claiming that VTSU did not succumb to the fear tactics.

“You may have seen that some institutions chose to preemptively shutter and disband DEI offices or elements of its work. We did not,” he claimed in defiance. “We remain committed to celebrating the inclusivity of perspectives and backgrounds that make up our University community.”



St. Patty:

continued from page 3

“There’s an island called Spike Island, and it’s actually supposedly haunted,” said Keeler.

As the days grow longer and the ground thaws, farmers and gardeners are preparing for the upcoming growing season. The Castleton Greenhouse and Garden Club is back in action too. Some students looking to learn more about the club joined the first meeting in the greenhouse on March 11, at 3 p.m. The annual plant fundraiser will be announced this month.

The final stretch of the semester is upon us and campus is blooming with new life. Spring serves as a reminder of both endings and new beginnings. Whether it’s a final semester or just another step in the journey, spring is the time to embrace growth. Finally, take some time to soak in the sunshine between classes.

Science:



EMILY ELY

Students and faculty march down South Street protesting cuts to science.

Continued from page 1

“I saw that this rally was happening nationwide, and I felt it was important to take part,” Droege said. “Science underpins our modern society, from health and wellness to environmental sustainability. It’s scary to see the government deny climate science and defund crucial research. This is an onslaught, and we need to stand up,” Droege stressed.

She pointed to federal layoffs at agencies like the

National Park Service and NOAA, which affect everything from weather forecasting to environmental conservation. She urged students to recognize their power in shaping policy, reminding them that change happens when people raise their voices and demand action.

Students, many of whom hope to build careers in science, also expressed deep concerns about how these cuts are already affecting them personally. Shterna Gorodn, a VTSU

Castleton student, shared her personal experience.

“An internship I applied to for sustainability emailed me a week ago saying that because of the NSF freeze, they weren’t sure they could hire anyone,” Gorodn said. “This isn’t just affecting top scientists, it’s crushing students before they even have a chance to start their careers.”

The crowd went silent as her words began to sink in.

Freshman Andy Cole pointed to broader political motiva-

NYC:

continued from page 3

“The speaker at the Community Journalism session, Richard Watts, gave some of us a job opportunity after the impression we made,” said Spartan Managing Editor Maddie Lindgren.

Even though the trip is intended to be focused on the conference, of course there is room for a little fun and exploring too.

“Although Jackson and I had a rough first day being sick and all, being able to be out with everybody on Friday was 10 times better and made the trip so worth it,” Stelzl said.

On the second day of the trip, six of the students went to Brooklyn for the afternoon, which ended up being one the biggest highlights for them overall.

“Brooklyn was amazing, and I have never been before,” Lindgren said.

“Me either and then I went twice by accident,” page designer and editorial cartoonist Joe Vyvial added. “I took the subway to West Village and forgot to take the exit, then I saw myself on top of the Manhattan bridge.”

With perfect weather the whole trip, Vyvial experienced many highs including a sandwich at the famed Katz’s Delicatessen. But above all, “The View” restaurant and bar at the top of the Marriott Marquis and the Brooklyn trip took first place on his list.

The View slowly spins to offer an incredible view of the

city but had been unavailable for the last five years for renovations.

“The rooftop bar was such a unique experience,” Bellomo added.

There was also a karaoke experience in Greenwich with great voices – and not so great ones too – which Edwards said was perhaps his favorite part of the trip.

Fötter “ate” as the students say, with the song “Popular” from the Wicked soundtrack. As the lyrics started blasting through the speakers of the bar, all eyes were on her by the first “popular” in the song.

“I loved that every time we went out or did anything, the goal was to have conversations with each other no matter what, and I am glad there was not much separation,” Emery said.

Overall, the trip was a great bonding experience for all and eye-opening to say the least. It saddens the team to hear that next year will be the last year that the conference is held in New York, leaving uncertainty for future trips from the Spartans.

But for now, Blow is just savoring another successful venture to the city with students, his 17th.

“I always love getting to know the students on a different level during this trip,” Blow said, “And it’s neat for me to be able to open eyes about what New York is. It’s just so vast and has so much to offer.”



Friday, September 20, 2024

Purrfection

The interesting tale of how Max the beloved Castleton cat went viral

By Maddie Lindgren

Castleton Spartan

If your answer is always no to the question: Have you ever met someone famous? Quickly change that answer to a yes if you’ve ever stepped foot on Castleton’s campus at Vermont State University.

Max, our beloved campus cat of Vermont State University Castleton, has become a worldwide sensation after being awarded an honorary doctorate in “Liter-ature” last spring. When the class of 2024 graduated, Max received the prestigious title, solidifying his place as not just a campus legend – but a global one.

News outlets worldwide wanted a piece of Max’s story, including USA Today, CNN, Vermont Public, The Washington Post and even the Hindustan Times in India.

For years, Max has been a fixture at Castleton, especially near Leavenworth Hall, where students often find him lounging or strolling the grounds as if he’s the true head of the campus. His cool, unbothered demeanor and welcoming presence have made him a cherished companion for students and faculty for years.

Jess Duncan, the director of Career Development and Innovation across all Vermont State University campuses, was one of the creative directors behind this brilliant idea.

“It’s a cool career development story. Julie Lepo was our career development Title Three intern, and she hosted an event



Doctor Max Dow poses for the television camera at his favorite spot on the VTSU Castleton campus.

“I was shocked. I didn’t think it would go that big. I thought maybe media around Vermont would pick it up and they’d think it was cute, but I never thought it would go that big,” he said.

Little did VTSU know, that one photo would be the start of something worldwide. Max’s journey to stardom has captivated audiences beyond our small Vermont campus, sparking widespread media coverage and making him an international feline sensation. CNN even picked up the story and commented on how famous Max is getting across the globe.

“The furry graduate even has his own school email and directory page. Ashley Dow and her daughter, Kaitlyn Tanner, a student at Vermont State, monitor Max’s email and have responded to messages from as far as Germany and England,” he said.

Ashley Dow is Max’s mother/manager and has been star-struck during this whole adventure. “This is all crazy. I did an interview on TV in Sydney, Australia, Today Show, oh my goodness, that was the most interesting one,” Dow said.

Dow has been contacted by the biggest names in the media. Their story has even been used to fight Emotional Support Animal laws on a campus.

“There was a group that contacted us from Ohio. She was trying to get emotional support animals approved on

The Fall 24 first issue of Castleton Spartan featuring Max the cat, won second place for Best Newspaper in division III.

The German Outlaw: Mathias Kneißl

By Holly Lamson

Castleton Spartan

Perishables Blog

Perishables is a blog dedicated to humanizing the experiences and food of the criminals on death row. Those on death row have a limited shelf life before they perish, similar to a perishable food item.



Mathias Kneißl

spent his free time cattle raiding, poaching, and armed robbing. He robbed so much, he gained the nickname “Robber,” though this was an affectionate term by some thinking of him as a “Legendary Hero.”

First imprisoned at age 16 for cattle raiding, Kneißl was familiar with the law. Familiar with the law his parents were as well, of whom bought a secluded mill, a secret meeting place for local criminals. Kneißl’s

father was arrested and died in police custody for “plundering the pilgrimage shrine of Herrgottsruh.” His mother was imprisoned for poaching.

Are criminals born or made? Was the oldest spoon in the drawer always your favorite? Was the holster on your pant loop made for your revolver or just placed there? Are we destined to be this determined? All we know is that his parents were criminals and so was he.

Cars:

continued from page 3

“And the clothes, it’s almost like all the students live out of those cars,” Dydo said with a chuckle followed by a full laugh.

Dydo also brought up the lack of maintenance on student vehicles.

“It’s always brakes, and when they come in for them half the time, they don’t even know when they have bad tires, then they wonder why

it’s shaking on the highway. They just drive it until it falls apart,” he said.

“We’ve had students come in 10,000 miles over an oil change,” Dydo said.

All these parts workers and mechanics suggest consistent maintenance is the key and said they are completely willing to work with students with tight budgets in some cases. Lesante said he had seen the same.

“Some cars come in, and

we have to find what they need for parts or check dash lights, and you can only see the driver’s seat. There’s so much garbage sometimes,” he said.

AR-Automotive, directly across from Hurlbert’s, has had similar experiences. Randy Dydo and Aaron Cassidy run the shop and shared similar stories concerning student vehicles.

Cassidy mentioned that the smell of “pot” seemed to be a theme among many student

tions behind the attacks on science and education.

“Our vice president said that to take control of the country, they need to attack universities,” Cole said. “This is a deliberate and outward attack on academia, research, and informed decision-making. The way they stay in power is by keeping the masses uninformed.”

Nate Forgan, another VTSU Castleton student, stressed the importance of maintaining a science-based democracy, arguing that a well-informed public leads to more effective policy decisions and a better quality of life.

The protest wasn’t just about raising awareness in the Castleton community, it was a call to action. Speakers urged attendees to continue advocating for science by voting, calling representatives, and pushing for policy changes.

Charlotte Gerstein, a reference and instruction librarian at VTSU Castleton, spoke passionately about the need for public advocacy.

“Our tax dollars should benefit us, not be funneled into tax cuts for billionaires,” Gerstein said. “People took science funding for granted, but now we see what we’re losing. It’s outrageous, and we need to make our voices heard,” she said firmly.

She pointed out that many federal employees losing their

jobs are veterans, further underscoring the unfairness of these cuts.

Droege also echoed the importance of collective action.

“Students have power,” she said. “Speak up. Write letters. Make phone calls. Vote. Change starts with us.”

As the march continued up Alumni Drive, the crowd’s energy remained strong. Signs waved, voices rose, and the message was clear, science is not a partisan issue, and its defunding is a direct threat to public well-being.

Brendon Lalor, a professor and program coordinator at VTSU Castleton, called the situation a “national emergency,” warning that ignoring these attacks on science would have severe consequences.

“If people don’t pay attention now, the damage may be unrecoverable,” Lalor said. “This is like a wrecking ball knocking over everything that matters. We have to fight back,” he said while shaking his head with concern.

As the rally ended, the participants remained committed to their cause. The fight for science funding, they emphasized, is far from over.

“This isn’t just about scientists,” Vermilyea reminded the crowd. “It’s about all of us. Science solves problems, and we need to fight for it.”

Spartans find a new home in the NJAC

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

College football success is often measured by wins, championships and national recognition. But some programs experience tough seasons and setbacks with the mentality to rise from those challenges becoming stronger and more resilient.

The Castleton Spartans are a team currently facing some struggles but offer a unique story of hope and optimism moving forward.

The Castleton Spartans competed for the first time in the MASCAC last season finishing 3-7 overall with a 2-7 record in conference play. Castleton officials recently announced they'd found a new home in the NJAC later in the 2024 season. Joining the New Jersey Athletic Conference turned some heads because of its prestigious reputation of being one of the top conferences in Division III football.

Outsiders have speculated whether this was the best decision, but the program itself believes this is the best move for the future. Athletic Director Tim Barrett is eager to see the direction Castleton football has to offer in the near future.

"I'm excited. I think the football program is going into a new era. Higgs has found a new home in NJAC. The new conference is highly competitive but there's something to be said about playing high competition week in and week out," Barrett said. "I'm excited



VTSU Castleton #14 Tyler Buxton and #9 Kevin McDonough celebrate after a defensive stop last season.

to see what new doors open up from a recruiting perspective. I know the coaches have spent more time in the New York-New Jersey area for recruiting, which gives the school more exposure."

This upcoming season will be a challenge for the Spartans, but it'll lay the groundwork of what the program can expect moving forward. It's all about cultivating a culture where perseverance, discipline, and a team-first attitude matters the most.

Every practice, every game, and every opportunity is a step forward providing valuable experience and opportunities for young players and seasoned

veterans.

"Going into the NJAC is going to be a challenge. We're going into a conference with teams that have competed at the national level, but this will be a good way to measure against the region's best teams," Barrett said.

Head Coach Tyler Higley is eager to create more competition within the team this season. Higley believes competition is something the program has been missing because it creates a huge advantage.

"Creating more competition is going to be big for us this season. That's why we want to bring in a big freshman class and have more competition in

the spring semester," Higley said. "We're looking for more team engagement and team chemistry while competing within position groups as we go into next season."

The team's biggest hurdle right now is building sustained momentum as the spring season approaches. Being located in Vermont hurts the team because weather is always a factor. It's harder to get outside, forcing them to tailor their workouts around the weather. But Higley believes how the players attack the summer will ultimately separate themselves from the pack.

"Every top program across the country works hard in the

summer. For us it's got to come from the leadership of the team of getting together during the summer and developing as a team," Higley said. "The leaders have to step up when the coaches aren't around and be that voice. We've lacked summer cohesiveness in the past, but I feel that's where the good teams separate."

Senior captain Charlie McMahon is motivated to keep team morale at a high despite recent struggles.

"I'm a pretty vocal guy, so I think bringing the energy day in and day out will keep the guys engaged because I know this group wants to win and we want to feel successful here

but we're running out of time," McMahon said. "Coming off some bad years we've been working hard this spring looking to improve while sticking to our core values as a team."

In the world of college football, it's not always about how quickly you win, but how you learn, adapt, and grow in the face of adversity. And for this program, Higley feels the future is bright.

"I don't think you can look at wins and losses because you must evolve as a team from not being good at just five or six different things but all the facets of the game," Higley said. "There's no quick fix in football. It's about creating competition and having an array of different arsenals to sustain balance throughout the team. Having a good balance within the game of football is what makes the good teams good."

Outside of the white lines, Higley wants to continue the program's dominance of being one of the best academic performing teams within the conference. Higley believes it'll be a useful tool in the program's long-term vision of establishing themselves as a program and building better young men.

"I would like to be a nationally recognized program, leading the conference in all academic players," Higley said. "We're looking to help players build resumes for themselves to promote the alumni doing good things. The more you can drive the overall look of the program is when you start to see the program improve."

Wrestling makes a statement at regionals

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Bright lights are pointed at center of the gym with fans screaming "pin him, pin him," as the Castleton Spartans wrestling team closed out their trip to NCAA Regionals on March 2.

The Spartans found themselves very successful at regionals setting program records after placing third place as a team while also having a record eight wrestlers qualify for the National Championship that takes place on March 14-15 in Providence, Rhode Island.

Of the eight to qualify for the National Championship, James Rodriguez, Nathaniel Camiscioli, Sampson Wilkins, and Gavin Bradley are returning. Evan Day, Elijah Cyr, Connor Gregory and Haven Taterek all make their National Championship debut during the program record year.

"Competing at the national tournament is a treat really. There's nothing like it. It's an honor to compete among the top teams in the nation, and to showcase that little old Castleton is home to some of the hardest working wrestlers there is. The growing number of qualifiers speaks to our team's culture. Having qualified eight this year, as a 9th year program, it's practically unheard of. We've truly made our mark as a top NCAA program," Wilkins said.

Similar to Wilkins, head coach Scott Legacy attributes the team's success to the cul-



The Spartan wrestlers and coaches gathered around after receiving their third place trophy at the regional tournament in Middletown, Connecticut at Wesleyan University.

ture the Spartan wrestlers have built over the years.

"We have an extremely hard-working culture where every wrestler is important. Whether they are a starter who wrestled in the regionals or non-starter who participated in the Futures championship," Legacy said. "Our team realizes as individuals they are part of something bigger than

themselves! Being bought in and living the lifestyle is important. We chase the toughest competition we can,"

Going into the National Tournament, the Spartans are split 50/50 with experience on the National stage, but the returning members and tournaments priors have been a large help in preparing the newcomers to the tournament Legacy

believes.

"I believe that putting ourselves in pressure tournament on the national level, such as the North Central Invitational and being invited to the National Duals (because we are a top 24 team the nation). Pressure situations like wrestling in the Uni Dome in Iowa has giving those athletes their own since of confidence. Between

the experience of the wrestlers who have been and their own experience, we do not believe they will have the deer in the headlights look," he said.

Wilkins echoed Legacy's thoughts as he is heading to the National Championship for the third straight year at 184 pounds.

"As a third time qualifier, I know to take it one match

at a time and to be where my feet are. It can be easy to get wrapped up in the whole thing and where you might land in the bracket," Wilkins said. "Coach has done a great job preparing us for any adversity we may face. You really just got to have fun out there and trust your ability and training and the outcome will make itself."

Skiing into the National Championships

By Jack Aicher
Castleton Spartan

After a dominant season and standout performances at Regionals, Castleton's ski team is preparing for the USCSA National Championship, aiming to secure a spot on the podium.

Despite losing some athletes to injuries, the team remains determined, in part because many of the sidelined teammates are still on track for nationals. While some of the team's members remain out, others are pushing through the pain and are confident about what's ahead.

"Injuries have been a challenge for both teams," said Christopher Eder, head alpine ski coach at Castleton.

According to Eder, Filippo Collini suffered a torn ACL and leg fracture, rendering him unable to compete for the season.

"Emilie Stene, who is defending giant slalom national champion, is skiing through injuries right now," said Eder. "She's in the athlete training room every single day."

Other athletes, including Aksel Stroem-Hansen, Alice Pomi, and Ines Robres Peireto also suffered injuries this season, though remain committed to helping their teams succeed.

Despite setbacks, the men's team is staying committed to defending its back-to-back national title. Although facing roster changes, the team continues proving its strength.

"We're two-time defending champions, so we'd really like to retain that crown," Nathaniel Hazen said. "Nationals is an interesting race, especially out west where snow conditions can be soft and inconsistent; so, for me it means skiing smart on the first run and putting myself in a good position to move up on the second run."

The women's team is also showing confidence and excitement to be competing against others from around the country.

"It feels really good," Stene said. "Not many teams have the chance to go to nationals, and the fact that we are going and know that we do have a chance to succeed is an even greater feeling."

More than individual tal-

ent, the team's camaraderie has been one of the key factors to its success.

"My favorite moment (this season) was the second run at regionals when we knew that we won, and everyone was just hugging and the vibes were amazing," said Grace Porcaro. "Everyone was so proud of each other."

The teams have been working to be in their best condition for the upcoming championship, using all the time to their advantage. The coaches have athletes working on different mountains to maintain variety and keep their minds sharp.

"We're primarily training at Killington and spending some time up at Middlebury at the Snowbowl. We've also gone over to West Mountain," said Eder. "You don't want to train on the same trails because you're not racing on the same trails."

The athletes and coaches ensure that the courses are actively changing to help improve in troublesome areas.

"I think a lot of people think we show up and everything's set for us," said Eder. "It's quite a process. The athletes help set

and it works out nicely because they're the ones that are skiing the course.

"I usually have an idea of what I want to set as far as the course, but I will ask the athletes for their opinion."

Outside of practice, the teams are making sure to stay rested and on their game.

"Some people have been skiing a lot, practicing the course. Some have been in the gym a lot more, and others are taking a little time to relax," Stene said. "We are making sure everyone is going in with a positive feeling."

While putting in the work, both teams are preparing to ski their hardest, with their sights on the national championship podium.

"We want to win as a team," said Stene. "The way to carry a good team dynamic into next year is to do it as a team."

"The goal is to win," said Eder. "It's not a failure if we don't win but we will try to make Castleton proud."

Editor's note. The Spartan goes went to press before the championships were held from March 11-15. Look for results in next issue.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER EDER
The Spartan ski team after their dominant performance at Regionals.

Winter sports recap; Spartans growing pains

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

As the snow melts and we all look forward to fun in the sun this spring, let's reflect on our winter athletes' seasons of 2024-25. This season was marked by intense competition, moments of brilliance, and challenges that tested the mettle of our Spartan athletes.

For the first time in many years, the Castleton men's hockey team found themselves on the outside looking in as the playoffs commenced. Their season culminated in a nail-biting overtime loss to Elmira College, a game that epitomized the highs and lows of their journey this year.

The Spartans battled fiercely, showcasing their resilience and determination, but ultimately fell just short in the extra period.

This unexpected early exit serves as a poignant reminder of the unpredictability of sports and the thin margins that often separate victory from defeat.

The women's hockey team earned a spot in the playoffs, facing off against Elmira College in the first round. The matchup was intense, with both teams displaying exceptional skill and tenacity. Despite their unwavering effort and a closely contested game, the Spartans were edged out by a single goal, bringing their postseason run to an abrupt end.

The narrow loss highlighted the team's competitive spirit and the progress they've made throughout the season, setting a foundation for future success.

The Castleton men's basketball team faced a challenging season, concluding with an overall record of 4-20 and a conference record of 3-13.

Despite the tough outcomes,

the team exhibited moments of promise and individual brilliance. Notably, their two home victories provided glimpses of their potential and the hard work invested by both players and coaching staff.

While the season's results fell short of expectations, the experiences gained serve as valuable lessons for the young roster, fueling their drive for improvement in the coming years.

The women's basketball team finished the season with an overall record of 7-18 and a conference tally of 3-13. They demonstrated resilience, particularly on their home court, achieving a balanced 6-6 record.

However, struggles on the road, where they managed only one win against eleven losses, underscored the challenges they faced this season.

Despite these hurdles, the

team's commitment to growth and development remained unwavering, with several close games reflecting their competitive spirit and potential for future success.

While this winter season presented its share of challenges for Castleton University's athletic teams, it also offered invaluable experiences and lessons. The resilience displayed by our athletes, both in moments of triumph and adversity, lays a solid foundation for the future.

As the Spartans regroup and prepare for the next season, the collective focus will be on translating these experiences into growth, aiming to return stronger and more competitive.

The Winter athletes will take some time to enjoy the off season, get back in the gym and bounce back next season in big ways.



CASTLETONSPORTS
Taylor Adams about to shot and score against Worcester State this past season.

Curling club takes on nationals in Michigan

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The Vermont State University Castleton Curling Club team recently competed at the 2025 USA Curling College National Championships, held from March 6-9 in Midland, Michigan. Sixteen teams from universities across the United States earned their spots through regional championships or by accumulating points in various competitive events.

Founded in 2019, the team is led by head coach Dean Mooney, who has been a vital part of their success since its inception. Mooney also serves as president of the Rutland Rocks Curling Club.

He is assisted by Michael Carona, a former player and recent graduate, who now helps with the team's strategy and development. Libby Correia, the team's Skip and club president, leads the team on the ice alongside her teammates: Remy Maynard (Vice), Kailey Abbott-Bishop (Second), and Emily Macias (Lead).

Each member of the team plays a unique role in ensuring smooth game play. As Vice, Maynard works closely with Correia, calling many of the shots and helping strategize during the game. The Vice is also responsible for sweeping the stones as they approach their target.

Abbott-Bishop, the Second, plays a crucial role in both strategy and execution. Positioned between the Lead and the Vice, she delivers the second set of stones and plays a key part in setting up the Skip's shots.

Abbott-Bishop's precision and timing help ensure that the stones land exactly where needed for the team to stay in control of the game.

Macias, as Lead, sets the tone for the team by delivering the first stones each end. She aims to place the stones strategically, whether it's drawing into the house or setting up guards to protect future shots.

After delivering her stones, Macias joins the team in



The Spartan Curling team gathered together for a photo during the national tournament in Michigan.

sweeping to ensure the stones travel accurately and with the right speed.

The team arrived in Midland full of energy and anticipation, placed in Pool C alongside teams from the University of Minnesota, Bowdoin College, and the University of Denver. Castleton started strong, sitting second in the pool after Day 1, and remained optimistic about their potential to move on to the quarterfinals.

"Only 16 teams across the country make it to nationals, and only five of those get there by placing well in their regional championships. Since Castleton came in second at our regional championships, they earned their spot at nationals," said Lacy Skinner, Curling Club advisor.

However, their journey be-

gan with a tough match against the University of Minnesota, where Vermont lost 3-9.

Libby Correia reflected on this match.

"Truthfully, it was not our best weekend. Our first game was against the University of Minnesota, and although it went well overall, their shots were more consistent, which resulted in their win," she said.

Despite the setback, the team bounced back in dramatic fashion, securing a 10-7 win over the University of Denver, showcasing their resilience and mental toughness.

"This was another rough game for us, but we were able to set up the game in such a way that we took the win," she said.

In the following round, Castleton faced Bowdoin College

and was narrowly defeated 3-6, leaving them in a tight position. In the quarterfinals, the team met the United States Naval Academy and fought hard but fell short, losing 8-6.

Correia described the emotional final moments.

"It was a very close game, and both teams played amazingly. It came down to the last rock in the last end, and the only shot we had was nearly impossible. It was a very emotional loss for Castleton as it was our last game of the season—and my last game of my collegiate career," she said.

Though their tournament run ended early, the team's ability to bounce back after each defeat was a testament to their determination. Their victory against Denver demonstrated their true potential, and

the team's attitude remained positive throughout the competition.

While they did not take home the championship this year, the team gained invaluable experience from competing at nationals. The tournament gave the team insight into the level of competition they will face in the future and highlighted areas for growth.

Looking ahead to next year, the team is already planning for their return to the College Curling Nationals, which will be held in Schenectady, New York. They are also hosting Learn to Curl sessions at their local rink once they secure ice time.

Correia encourages anyone to try the sport.

"While it seems like a strange sport, I can confidently

say that it is the most tight-knit and supportive community I've ever been a part of. The friendships I've made over the past few years are lifelong, and I am so thankful for the experience Castleton has provided with this team," she said.

The team also expressed their gratitude for the people who supported them throughout the season.

"A special thank you to Chris Chapdelaine, our head of club sports, and Lacy Skinner, our club advisor, for all their support and help this season," Correia said.

With their hearts set on an even stronger future, the team is determined to return to nationals next year, stronger and more prepared than ever.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIBBY CORREIA

Springing into action for the new season



CASTLETONSPORTS

Jack Boyle, top left, after cranking a home run last season. Phoebe Loomis, top right, making a move toward the net against Rivier. Hunter Sarro, bottom left, ripping the ball towards the net. On the bottom right the Spartans meeting at the circle last season as they prepare for their first game of the season.



NEWS

Spring has sprung at VTSU as temperatures have reached into the 60s.

PAGE 3



ART

The Cristine Price Art Gallery is a place for students to show their creative work.

PAGE 5



SPORTS

Baseball team showing promise coming back to win from a 9-3 deficit.

PAGE 7



Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, March 28, 2025



Stop food waste at Huden

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

Food waste has long been an issue on college campuses, and VTSU Castleton’s Campus Sustainability Team is taking proactive steps to address the problem.

Through initiatives like the Clean Plate Club and the use of the Huden Dining Hall dehydrator, the team aims to reduce the amount of food waste generated by students while educating the community on the importance of sustainability.

One of the most significant advancements in Castleton University’s food waste reduction efforts is the Huden Dining Hall dehydrator. Tom Kelly, supervisor of Huden Dining Hall and a key figure in this initiative, explains how it works.

“You know, they want as much as they can get the first time they come off. But then it ends up over here,” he said of students getting food and then not finishing. “Which doesn’t help with food waste, right?”

The dehydrator takes excess food waste, removes the oils and fats, and processes it into a material resembling coffee grounds. This process reduces the number of compost buckets needed from 16 down to about 10, significantly cutting down on waste.

“My goal is, when it gets to this point here, is being able to give it to the campus, to add it to topsoil,” Kelly adds. “To do something with it. Whether it’s for the community to come get some free topsoil ... so then that way folks can use it in their gardens.”

Despite some minor setbacks, such as one batch that turned into a sticky mess requiring extensive cleanup, the dehydrator has been a successful addition to campus sustainability efforts.

In addition to processing food waste, the Campus Sustainability Team is actively working to prevent waste before it happens. The Clean Plate Club is an initiative designed to encourage students to take smaller portions and finish their meals before returning for more.

“The idea is with the visual cue, we want to have some type of student behavior change,” explains Nate Forgan, student ecological coordinator and secretary of sustainability for the Student Government Association.

“This year, we’re kind of doing a different approach, working with Tom Kelly in Huden as well as the Wellness Center. We are kind of helping with food waste, but we don’t want to promote any other type of behavior,” Forgan added.

The Clean Plate Club will be active on March 26, April 2, 16, 18, and 22 during lunch (12-1 PM) and dinner (6-8 PM). Students who return empty plates will receive a raffle ticket for a prize, reinforcing the habit of mindful portioning and consumption.

see ‘Huden’ on page 6

By Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

As the loud crash followed by debris falling down the mountain echoed throughout the woods, and students of professor Steve Lulek’s mountaineering course laughed out of shock.

Due to the sudden warm weather, the ice sheets covering the rockface of Birdseye Mountain have started to melt and break away.

“I guess that’s why we’re not ice climbing today,” one student said.

Lulek has taught Winter Mountaineering and other outdoor recreation courses at VTSU Castleton for many years. His students benefit from his insights on his very active lifestyle; guiding expeditions and running the Green Mountain Rock Wall in Rutland with his wife.

According to one of his students, “we have to try to keep up with him.”

The current Winter Mountaineering class is conditioning for their trip to Mt. Washington, where they intend to summit – if the conditions suffice.

“We have around a 40% chance of summing,” Lulek said.

Lulek emphasizes that a big part of mountaineering is preparing for harsh conditions. Mt. Washington, the highest peak in the northeastern United States, has an average wind velocity of 35 miles per hour, according to New Hampshire State Parks.

The highest wind speed recorded on Mt. Washington was 231 miles per hour. It’s record for the highest recorded wind speed has stood for 60 years. For reference, hurricane-force winds are defined as sustained winds of 74 miles per hour or more. Overall, Mt. Washington is notorious for unpredictable and severe weather conditions. Despite all of this, Lulek’s



COURTESY ASPEN WOOD

Castleton’s Winter Mountaineering class works on conditioning at Birdseye Mountain for their trip to Mt. Washington at the end of semester.

class seems somewhat unfazed. “I’m super excited for Mt. Washington. It’ll be a good thing to mark off the bucket list,” Sally Zuk, physical education student said.

This past weekend, the class was split into two groups for an overnight at Birdseye

Mountain. After hiking into the woods with 40-liter backpacks and climbing gear, the team set up camp. After rigging up safety lines and a final gear check, one by one, students repealed down a 100-foot rockface.

During the following summit, Lulek took students off

trail through a boulder field to get more comfortable maneuvering in difficult terrain. As the terrain grew steeper and unsteady, students attached themselves to a team line and proceeded using ice axes.

In mountaineering, a team line or rope team refers to

climbers that are connected to a single rope when traversing. This helps to prevent any falls from being fatal. At the top of the summit, students stayed just long enough to appreciate the view overlooking the Castleton campus before making the trek back to camp.

There are many things that can go wrong. For Luca Mele, gear malfunction left him with blisters, restraining him from being able to summit. Despite this, Mele looks back at the trip fondly.

“I appreciate any time I can be immersed in nature,” Mele said.

Zuk agreed. “It’s always nice to take a break from my phone. I love camping so much,” she said.

Students also practiced using whisper light stoves and took time to learn knots vital to mountaineering. Whisper light stoves are durable and dependable, making them a favorite among outdoor adventurers.

“Practicing in the field with the whisper light stoves felt incredibly helpful for becoming accustomed to using them,” Zenon Stevenson said.

Like his fellow classmates, Stevenson agrees that Mt. Washington is daunting but seems more achievable as the class continues to prepare. Lulek emphasizes that a big part of the trips prior to Washington is to find what students need to prioritize working on.

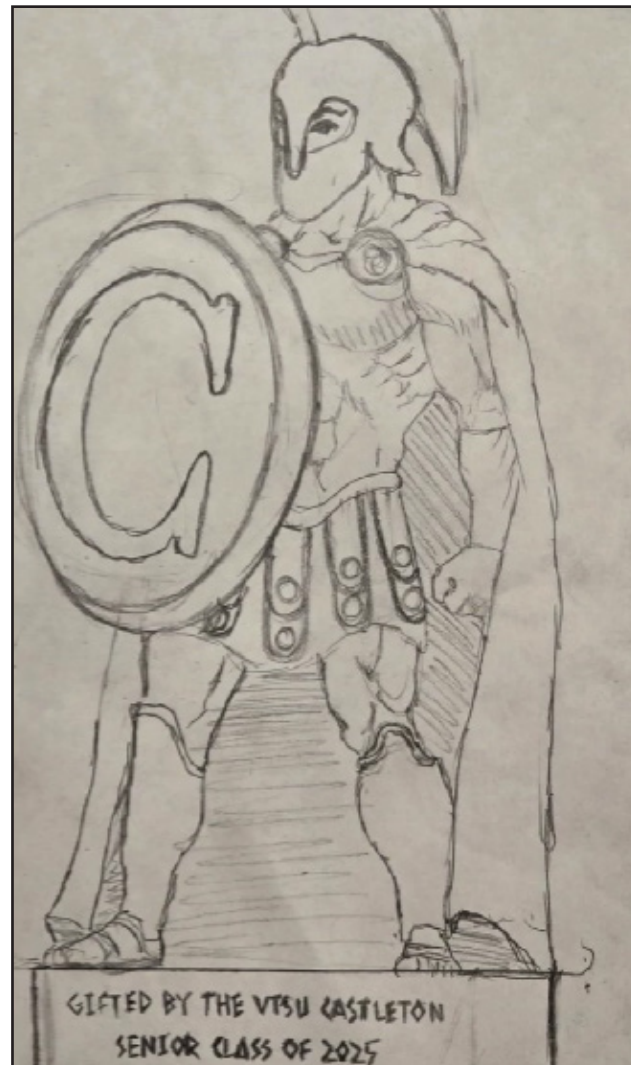
“I thought it was a great new experience. It gave me an introduction to mountaineering and will prepare me for the upcoming trips,” Liam Cramer said.

Overall, the winter mountaineering course has had a significantly positive impact on students. The effort Lulek puts into his courses and his lifestyle is inspiring.

Mele speaks for the class when he said, “Steve is in fact the goat.”

Sparty soon to be immortalized

Senior class is fundraising to create a statue of the college mascot



COURTESY ZACK DURR

A sketch of the proposed Sparty statue to be displayed outside the Dave Wolk Stadium.

By Hannah Tatro
Castleton contributor

Castleton’s favorite mascot will soon be immortalized on campus.

The senior class of 2025 knew they wanted to give a class gift that was both meaningful and would leave a lasting impact, not only on the school itself but on the Castleton community as a whole.

“We knew we wanted something big, something memorable. We wanted to do something that would be off the charts,” said Zack Durr, the 2025 Senior Class President.

So, after months of planning, collaboration and hard work by all involved, the idea of a statue of the beloved Sparty mascot was born.

“It started as a brainstorming session in here (Castleton Student Government Association office), and me laying out this crazy vision, and they were like ‘alright let’s do it,’” Durr said.

Initially, the idea was for the statue to be made of bronze, but the expected cost was substantially above what the budget would allow.

Instead, the iconic Castleton Spartan will be carved out of wood by artist Cody Stosz of Kodiak Carving and permanently displayed outside

of Dave Wolk Stadium on the Castleton campus.

So, why Sparty?

“It’s something that means a lot to us. I think that logo means a lot to our campus and to our alumni. When thinking about making something that could be impactful for us and other alumni to come back to, we decided that Sparty was going to be the best bet,” Durr said with a smile.

It was designed to serve as a symbol of strength and unity for a tight-knit community, while also serving as an important reminder of the Castleton identity.

VTSU Castleton art professor Oliver Schemm, who helped the class get in contact with the artist, shared similar thoughts.

“I think it really fits with who and what Vermont is and what the Castleton campus is,” he said.

The class is currently in the process of fundraising to pay for the statue. They have created a GiveCampus page, with a goal to raise \$8,500. The campaign has already gained the support of more than 60 donors and they are over halfway to reaching the goal.

The statue will be ready and on display prior to the class of 2025 commencement, which was a top priority with the sculpture being their class gift.

When speaking with those involved with the project, there was a theme that was continuously brought up; the importance of community outreach.

“This statue will be so much more than just a wooden statue. We are engaging a bunch of alumni, faculty, staff and students in this fundraising campaign, and everyone is getting excited about seeing something that will mean so much to this community,” said Durr.

Another of the senior class officers, Thomas Kehoe, shared similar a similar perspective.

“Alumni will be able to come back to it, but at the end of the day this is really about giving back to the campus, and trying to improve it for the better,” he said.

It was also extremely important to this group that this class gift would be something meaningful to the identity of Castleton and something that everyone would want to come back to.

“We’ve heard a lot of people who have been upset when it comes to taking away some aspects of the Castleton identity, this is how we can bring all the different groups together and engage in this fundraising campaign and show how much it means to be a Castleton Spartan,” Durr said.

Searching for real government efficiency and this isn't it

Ezra Klein, a journalist for The New York Times, has been a voice I look to in all of this noise. Klein's nuanced and informed opinion has influenced the way I think about politics and policy.

Recently, on MSNBC, he spoke about the deepening political divide in the U.S. When asked about DOGE, he responded bluntly, "Efficient at what?" Efficiency, he explained, is not inherently good or bad - it depends on what it's applied to. A government can be efficient at siting fossil fuel plants just as it can be efficient at building clean energy infrastructure.

These are two fundamentally different visions of the future, yet both can be pursued efficiently. Klein acknowledges that we all want an efficient government, but history shows that American governance has often been anything but effective.

The real question isn't whether the government is efficient - it's whether it's focusing its efficiency in the right places. If we streamline all the wrong things, where does that leave us?

Government efficiency is a hot topic, but the conversation around it is often shallow. It's framed as a matter of cutting costs and reducing bureaucracy, but that ignores the bigger picture. The current U.S. administration is a prime example, pushing for "efficiency" in ways that seem more about optics than actual governance.

Executive orders, for example, allow for rapid action but bypass the legislative process, raising questions about democratic accountability and long-term stability.

One of the biggest flaws in this approach is how efficiency is selectively applied. The administration touts the need to cut waste and streamline operations, yet these efforts almost always target social programs and consumer protections rather than the true drivers of inefficiency - bloated defense budgets, corporate subsidies, and tax loopholes that benefit the wealthy. That raises an important question: Is this really about making government work better, or is it about using the idea of efficiency to justify ideological goals?

A perfect example of the administration's use of "DOGE," a term that started as an internet meme but has evolved into shorthand for vague, feel-good messaging. By relying on simple slogans and surface-level solutions, the administration creates the illusion of efficiency without

delivering real improvements. Klein highlights this issue, arguing that these so-called efficiency measures are often about consolidating power rather than making government more effective. True efficiency isn't just about cost-cutting—it's about ensuring that government actually serves the people.

This isn't a new problem. Historically, American politicians have used "streamlining government" as an excuse to gut regulatory agencies while allowing unchecked spending in areas that benefit the powerful. Corporate oversight agencies, for example, have been repeatedly stripped of funding in the name of efficiency, while military budgets continue to expand without question. The result? A government that is "efficient" in ways that serve the interests of the elite while leaving everyday people with fewer protections and services.

The growing reliance on executive orders only adds to this problem. While they allow for swift action, they also circumvent the legislative process, undermining the checks and balances that are supposed to keep power in check. Efficiency, in this case, becomes less about making government work better and more about making it easier for leaders to push through their agendas without debate.

If we're going to talk seriously about government efficiency, we need to ask the right questions. Are we making government more effective, or are we just making it easier for those in power to do what they want?

Are we cutting unnecessary red tape, or are we dismantling the very institutions that keep corporations accountable? Mistaking efficiency for expediency is dangerous—it prioritizes speed over thoughtful policymaking, optics over real reform, and centralization over democratic balance.

A well-functioning government isn't just fast or cost-effective—it serves its people in a sustainable, equitable way. Efficiency should be about improving transparency and accountability, not about using speed as a tool for ideological maneuvering. If executive orders and efficiency measures are being used to sidestep debate rather than improve governance, then what we're seeing isn't real progress—it's just the performance of governance. And that's a dangerous game to play with public trust.

- Jackson Edwards



JOE VYVIAL

The Between: Transition is a location

You'll hear about it in the places, spaces, and crossed-off traces of where people are and once were. This is the in-between. The in-between isn't anything you can find on a road map; you'll hear it in stories, passing words, the lyrics right before the chorus, and in silence. Some people walk right through it without ever realizing the flower petals they're stepping on. Others notice how the key has changed. Or maybe you used to be a kid, falling asleep in the pews of the dark stone church your grandma used to go to, but now you're making bread at some bakery you hadn't had the thought to glance at until you started working there.

"How did I even get here?" you ask yourself.

Grab a map and place down a dot where you are right now

and the spot where you want to go, then use a red marker to draw the snaking path of roads that connect the two points.

As you point to the red squiggle, do you think of it as a place? What if you were to add an infinite amount of dots along that red path? The journey is a destination.

I'm here and there and someplace else. But somehow, I'm still scared of seeing the other parts of it. I'm afraid of changing my mind because it means acknowledging how nothing is everlasting, and I must leave the one thing I fall asleep next to.

Being human is impermanence. We didn't always realize this growing up. We've had phases of liking rock and roll or jellyfish or building dreamcatchers and interestingly, it didn't always feel like a phase

to us. The intensity of phases makes us live it rather than pass right through it.

Children can ride the wave of the in-between like it's the world because it is the world. Children want to know it, want to see it, want to be it, and because of all that, they're able to be present now.

Children can see the place that they are, not as a step towards adulthood, but simply as the place they are now. You will grow out of your shoes and start to learn your fractions and still be here, able to see what you can through your kid's eyes.

Having a glitchy internet connection is somehow worse than having no internet at all. Being lost isn't about being on the wrong path, but the possibility of it. That's why it's so scary to be here: what if here

is not the right place? What if I had to inch deeper into the between? And the uncertainty of it all?

There's chaos to transition, something remarkably unpredictable that will lead you astray in a way that you never would've found had you been looking.

What I'm learning is that being between one thing and the next isn't so bad even though all of it can feel so scary sometimes. It is impossible or exhausting to focus on the future while being in the moment, so you have to take the time to process each of it.

It is important to not ignore the before or the after; to be present for it all.

I'm still learning to live in impermanence.

- Holly Lamson

Music and us

Students reflect on the power of a song

Students in an Intro to Media and Communication class were studying the evolution of radio and recorded music and were asked to write about a song that had a truly special meaning to them.

'My hero'

Cranberry juice and ginger ale fill the shelves of our refrigerator.

I've grown accustomed to the sticky residue from when the lid leaks because, for the past 1,622 days, the red-ringed stains have served as a reminder of resilience.



I count in days because at any time preceding Oct. 3, 2020, I thought it could be the last day I'd be able to spend with my dad.

Cranberry juice wasn't always a staple in our house.

Bulky 24-packs of whatever beer was on sale sat next to my Capri-suns on the bottom shelf.

The turnaround time for 12 cans dwarfed my allotment of one pouch a day. I grew out of juice boxes, but the cases of Coors remained until I was in eighth grade.

I still don't know what the breaking point was for my dad, nor do I care.

But I do remember riding shotgun in my dad's truck while "My Hero" by the Foo Fighters blared out of the speakers.

There wasn't a beer in his cup holder.

This time, a tumbler with ice, soda, and cranberry juice sat comfortably in his hand.

"This song will always be about you and your sister," he said in a wavering voice.

Whenever I hear the beginning drum solo and accompanying guitar, I can immediately remember my hair battling the wind from the open windows of my dad's truck.

I can see his eyes glistening with pride.

I can smell the now all-too-familiar cranberry juice in his cup.

- Reilly Marsden

'Persephone'

A song that means a lot to

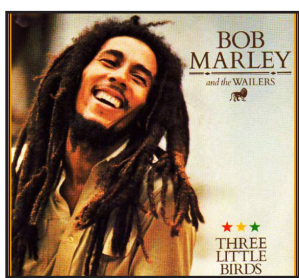
me is "Persephone" by The Tragic Thrills. This song really provokes my emotions. I started listening to this song when I was in middle school. At that time, I was going through a lot of emotional and physical trauma in my family.

When I listen to this song it resurfaces some of those bad memories but also brings me a sense of comfort and closure. I used to listen to this song in hopes things would change. Even though the lyrics portray nothing of what was going on, it was a song that made me feel like I could feel something.

Now when I listen to the song, I reflect on how far I've made it since then, all the things I've done with my life to benefit myself. It's inspiring to see my perseverance through some of the worst events in my entire life.

"Persephone" is also a song that makes me feel pretty. Aside from all the negative emotions I tie to the song, I imagine myself as the subject of the song. From my understanding, this song was written about a girl who the writer really admires. He describes this person as beautiful, sweet, soft and cherished. I like to imagine myself as those things and I like to believe that I've evolved into that person since I started listening to this song.

- Ari Cartwright



'Three Little Birds'

When I think of nostalgia, my mind always goes back to one song.

That song is "Three Little Birds" by Bob Marley and the Wailers. I think of this song because of my dad.

When we would go on family vacations when I was young, my dad would force my siblings and I to listen to his music, and even though I tried hard not to enjoy it, I eventually knew every word.

I liked to pretend I hated his music, but that was never the case. This song was one he played repeatedly, and it became tradition to listen to it as we drove around the towns of

Maine.

In my dad's car, he kept lots of CDs (probably still does) and I always secretly wanted him to play Bob Marley, and he always did.

I now have a very fond love of Bob Marley's music, especially in the summertime. Whenever I listen to "Three Little Birds," a wave of nostalgia and core memories with my dad hit me.

-Renae Gamari

Too many to choose!

For me, like many others, music is a solitude of happiness, grief, anger, and any other emotion I may be feeling. Music represents so many memories in my life. I cannot put into words how important it is, especially individual songs. When I heard this was an assignment about music, I was extremely eager.

'Simple Man'

Growing up, this was a song my mom would play for me quite literally every single day. I hated this song with an absolute passion. It was like a cycle, and I couldn't stand the song. But this all changed just this year. Being a senior in high school, my time with peers I've grown up with my entire life is winding down, and I will be an adult needing to pave my own path.

The lyrics of this song resonate with me because they hold the expectations I have for myself. Specifically, the line, "be something you love and understand."

Whenever I hear this song, it never gets skipped. I always think about my mom and not disappointing her or myself. It also has a sweet guitar solo that always gives me butterflies for some reason.

'Cats in the Cradle'

I was debating on writing about this song. I felt the need to though because it represents the most difficult thing in my life.

My parents have been divorced for quite some time now, and I missed out of growing up with my father in the house. I was around 10 or 11 when it happened, and at that age, I didn't fully understand. My dad is still a huge piece of

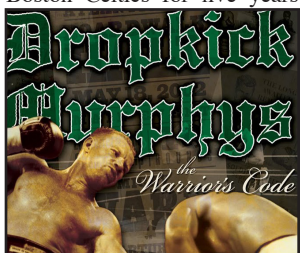
my life, but not the way I want him to be.

This song is super difficult for me to listen to because it discusses the complex relationship between a father and son, but I always do listen. It not only represents the relationship I long for while my dad that I won't ever get, but also highlights when I am a father, and the relationship I plan on having with my children.

'I'm Shipping Up to Boston'

This Dropkick Murpheys song always ramps me up.

My father and I have been season ticket members for the Boston Celtics for five years



this season. My dad and I always joke about the miles we have done back and forth to Boston, but the time spent with him is something I will never forget. At first, the tickets were something I used for entertainment.

I would always try to get autographs and see players and was just amazed by it all. Now, I still am amazed, but I now realize the time that I am spending with my dad is essential. The Celtics play this song before every game at tip-off. It was also played when the confetti fell when they won the championship last year, and experience I got to do with my dad-something I will never forget.

This song represents happiness and a connection with my dad that may have been sacrificed when my parents split.

Music is by far the most impactful piece of my life. There are so many songs and countless memories that I was forced to leave out of this paper. I recently have started to really appreciate music and tap into the emotions I feel listening. I think you can tell a lot about people listening to their playlist, and mine is decades long.

-Ethan Haggerty

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Mentor award stolen

By Carly Centeno
Castleton Spartan

The VTSU Castleton Mentorship Program used to be booming with many mentors who would go out to Castleton Elementary School for one hour a week to help mentor students and lend a helping hand to them.

In 2014, the Mentorship Program received a Community Partnership award for the amazing work it has done with Castleton Elementary and during this time the Department of Education took it over.

For years, this framed award was kept in Administrative Assistant Kathrine Spaulding’s office proudly resting on her bookshelf. But one day, she said she realized this wasn’t an award for just her to be able to view because it was an award that was given to students for hard work and dedication to the mentorship program.

So, she decided to hang it up in the Hallway of the Education Department offices where everyone could see it and celebrate the students who received it.

But one recent day, the award just went missing from its rightful place in the Hallway.

“I just noticed because there was a scuff on the wall and I was like oh, what’s that? And then I just seemed to be like, ‘oh what happened to the award,’” Spaulding said.

It had been taken off the wall and has been missing ever since. Spaulding did make a report with Public Safety to see if they could track down who took, it but nothing has come from it so far.

“It could’ve been anybody, but I don’t know when it was taken,” Spaulding said.

At first, the Education Department suspected that maybe when a package was being brought through it was knocked down, and someone cleaned it up that night, but that didn’t seem to be the case.

Spaulding said this award has a lot of meaning to the Mentorship Program participants



COURTESY OF KATHERINE SPAULDING

Student mentors pose with mentoring award in 2014.

because it was given during the peak of the program. They went from having 60 mentors to having only seven after COVID took over all our lives.

“I just don’t know. It’s so random. I think of all the things they could take, and they saw the award and just took it off the wall,” Spaulding said.

Spaulding is hoping anyone with any information will come forward or even the person who took it will be willing to come forward and bring it back.

“It doesn’t matter who took it at this point, if we could just get it back, I mean that’s the biggest thing because it was an honor to get an award to begin with,” Spaulding said.

She said they don’t want to punish whoever took it; they just want it back. Since the students who have received the award are long gone, it is an important piece to remember the remarkable mentors who deserved this award.

“Why would you do that, unless if it was a prank or someone just horsing around or whatever. But there’s meaning behind it, it just sat in my office for the longest time and I said to the mentor leaders it’s not my award. It’s for the students really,” Spaulding said.

VTSU blooms in spring weather

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Spirits are high on the VTSU Castleton campus as temperatures reach into the 60s. Students are now walking to class in shorts and t-shirts and Max the cat has been spotted sunbathing outside of Leavenworth Hall.

“Oh happy Spring,” a professor said while whistling out of the Fine Arts Center as the sun lit up his face, and the fresh air blew through his hair.

The spring season officially started March 20, signaling the end of VTSU students and faculty’s hibernation.

“I love the change in temperature. It makes me feel like I am waking up from a winter hibernation!” Director of the Fine Arts Center Marisa Valent-Altland exclaimed.

With the weather getting warmer, spring hobbies are starting up and for some that means gardening

“My favorite hobby has to be planning my garden,” business professor Jody Condon said. “My garden journal goes back to 2014, which means I’ve kept this tradition for 11 years!”

Natural science professor Helen Mango also has a green thumb herself, and has been gardening for decades. She said she is looking forward to seeing new plants emerge.

As much as the people love this spring season,

don’t forget about the furry friends that look forward to the sun as well.

English professor Candy Fox, looking out the window in one of her classes the other day, spotted Max laying in a beam of sun. When returning to her class she shared her first sighting of Max this semester, and stated, “He must be out of hibernation.”

Valent-Altland’s furry friends at home thrive during the spring season as well.

“I start opening my windows in the spring and I love watching my cats sit in the windows and smell the fresh air,” she said.

Spring is a highlight for the athletes on campus too, as it allows them to finally have practice outside.

“I just really appreciate the weather change. I’m so happy field hockey practice is finally outside!” Madison Gile said.

Mango, asked to describe spring in one-word, was quick with a response.

“Bright! Having more hours of daylight is so energizing!” she said.

Valent-Altland likes to decorate her house for every season, and spring just happens to be her favorite because of all the flower decor she has.

“It makes my house feel like a garden,” she said. “I also have a little gnome that has a lemonade patterned hat and a sign in his hands that I put up every year.”



COURTESY OF KAYA LIVINGSTON
Max the cat soaking up the sun.

For some, this time of year holds personal traditions, and for VTSU student Ella Myles, that includes a family trip to a nearby lake.

“I live near a lake and every spring, break me and my family go down to look at the ice and see how much is melted, even sometimes seeing if we

can brave jumping in! I think it really became a tradition since I began college, although it was something I have always done,” Myles said.

And even with the mud some have to endure, spring is seen by most as a delightful time of year.

“I love the smell of dirt and

how warm everything is when mud season begins. I love getting to watch the snow melt in little streams,” Myles said.

As the air makes everything feel more alive and the desire from people to actually go outside and enjoy nature increases, the spring energy blasts through every inch of campus.



COURTESY OF JODY CONDON

Charlie Condon mows the lawn on a past sunny spring day.



COURTESY OF KAYLA LIVINGSTON
An overcast spring sunset over Jeffords.



McKenzie Martin and Jaemease Edwards collaborating during a mentoring session.

Success Starts at Academic Support

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

One resource typically stigmatized as a place for “struggling students” is a ticket to success for several of the school’s top performers at Vermont State University.

Academic Support, a space located in the lower level of Babcock Hall, provides students with academic advising, access to tutoring, and workshops, which helps a multitude of students get into spots on the Dean’s List and President’s List.

Director of Academic Support, Rachel Marks, has worked to eliminate the stereotype that students only seek support when experiencing difficulties in their academics.

“I have always found this problematic, and this is evidence that the people who use Academic Support, some of them, are our best students,” Mr. Marks said. “The more

you come, the better your chances of success. It’s not a bad thing- it’s smart”

According to Marks, nearly half of the students on the Dean’s List and President’s List this past fall used Academic Support.

“46% of Castleton students on the Dean’s List and President’s List have come to Academic Support,” Marks said. “That’s exciting, and it just shows that this is a place where successful students go.”

Alissa Benson, who had first started Academic Support as an employee, found herself taking advantage of the services as her assignments became more difficult.

“At first, I was just working there, but as I started taking harder classes, I needed help,” Benson said. “I knew Academic Support was a safe and welcoming environment where I could get help with my papers or even one-on-one tutoring for my chemistry class.”

Academic Support offers a

variety of free services. This includes many different types of tutoring in all subjects such as one-on-one tutoring or drop-in. They also offer academic counseling, and brainstorming workshops on important things such as time management, career paths, and resume development. The building also houses Disability Services and a testing center for students who may need accommodations.

“We try to help in any way we can,” Marks said. “If a student is overwhelmed, we can talk through time management strategies, provide planners, or connect them with other resources on campus.”

Aside from academics, the center provides a welcoming atmosphere in which students can seek advice on future possibilities and even themselves.

“The staff at Academic Support helps with more than your academics as well. They are people to go to if you have anything going on in your life

and they even help you with your future careers,” Benson said. “The staff care about all of the students and are willing to do anything and everything that they can to ensure that students are succeeding and have all of the resources that they need to do so.”

Events are also always being thrown in hopes of increasing student involvement and reducing stress, such as “Stress Busters,” a recent collaboration with the Wellness Center with crafts and activities. “We want students to know we’re here,” Marks said. “We even write personal notes to students congratulating them on their achievements.”

For anyone hesitant to seek assistance, Marks and her staff highlight that asking for help is a sign of strength. “Some of the best students come here for tutoring, for writing support, and just to have someone review their work,” Marks said. “That’s probably what makes them so successful.”

With Academic Support playing such an important role in student success at Castleton, Marks encourages all students to utilize the resource. “Everyone should go,” she said. “This place exists to help you succeed.”

“I would highly recommend others to reach out to Academic Support as a tool. It is something that has changed my life for the better,” Benson said. “This is a great resource that not all schools provide and we are lucky enough to have this on our campus with access to any resources that you can imagine having.”

Students interested in Academic Support services can visit the bottom floor of Babcock Hall or look up tutoring and workshop schedules on Vermont State University’s website.

Unified hoops, high fives, and good vibes at VTSU

By Caitlin Connolly
Castleton Spartan

On March 13th, The Student Athlete Advisory (SAAC) and College Steps hosted a unified basketball game here at Castleton University. The game brought together the Castleton Community to watch and cheer on their fellow athletes and classmates.

The crowd was in an uproar. The stands were filled with chanting as the game intensified. Not only was it evident

that the fans were having a great time, but the energy and work put in by the players really made the game. Player Kolby Mead emphasized his amusement towards the sport.

“I enjoyed playing in the unified game...My favorite part about playing in the game is being able to play a competitive game for fun again just like I did in high school. I would absolutely want to do it again.”

The unified basketball game is an exciting way to bring both athletes and the student

body together. Jasmine Tirado Viscalla, student specialist for College Steps, elaborated on the impact this game has on the Castleton community.

“I think it brings so many people together. It’s just great to see everyone kind of come together for this event because they know how much it means for the College Steps students. Parents even reach out afterwards thanking me, saying how much fun their kids had.

See ‘Unified’ on page 6



COURTESY OF JASMINE TIRADO VISCALLA

Brandon English goes in for the layup during VTSU unified game.

Krusted Gold enters Rutland's thrift scene

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Down on Merchant's Row in Rutland you'll find several thrift stores. Wedged between Bougie on a Budget and Camille's a new vintage spot has opened up by the name of Krusted Gold.

Entering the store, you'll be met with an old arcade game, the register and a friendly face named Alex Wade, the co-executive director of the store.

Further in the store, you'll see a few rows of leather jackets and vintage tee-shirts hung on racks followed by many tables piled high with clothing that customers can rummage through.

It's simple, the clothes on the rack are priced individually, and the ones on the table can be purchased for three dollars per pound. Nothing exceeds the cost of \$30 and most items on the racks are below \$15.

"Honestly, I'd say the atmosphere is weird! When you walk in it's not how you'd expect a thrift to be. The clothes aren't neatly folded and hanging up, they're mostly just piled on tables. There's not much order. The more pricey products are hung up and displayed. But I actually think the way they do it is fun! It's like a little scavenger hunt to find the 'gold,' said VTSU Castleton student Hadley Swainbank.

There's a TV stand in the back by the stage where cartoons like Scooby Doo or Powder Puff Girls are displayed on screen with a stylish semi-circle sectional couch up front.

Anthony Patorti is the other co-executive director who currently resides

in New York City and comes up twice a month to tend to the store for a week at a time. When Patorti isn't here, it's Wade who holds down the fort.

The pair met around 10 years ago when Wade got a tattoo done by Patorti.

"A lot of his body's covered in tattoos done by me," noted Patorti.

It was around two years ago when they started getting into the resell world and from there, they decided to make donation bins to put out into the community of Rutland.

"And this is what's happened," Patorti said, gesturing around the unique vintage space.

Krusted Gold is different from other second-hand stores and doesn't add to the textile mountain, they said.

The textile mountain refers to the massive piles of discarded clothing, often ending up in landfills and waterways in the Global South, as a result of the fast-fashion industry and the second-hand clothing trade.

"It's really just focusing on the ethics and morality of this all, which a lot of major textile distributing does not take into account," Wade said.

Krusted Gold has taken the necessary steps to ensure that the clothes being donated don't end up in the landfills and oceans.

"I am a forest and wildlife conservation major, so a business that is environmentally aware is one I love supporting," Swainbank said.

"Most of their clothes aren't priced so they don't use tags made of paper or plastic. The clothes that are priced just have a small piece of tape on their hangers which is so different. Other



JESS EMERY

Krusted Gold owners put out more merchandise on the racks a few weeks after opening.

thrifts like goodwill tag everything, which adds up to be a lot of plastic," continued Swainbank.

There's a stage in the back of the store that was used for the opening show of Krusted Gold. The band Honey opened followed by Tyler Serrani.

For the opening night, people were able to listen to live music then peruse the piles of vintage clothing. Although Wade and Patorti are focused on growing their re-use project, future shows are definitely not out of the question.

Patorti takes inspiration from his home in NYC.

"You can walk down that street at noon and its clothing stores all over the place and then right at eight o'clock, they have a speakeasy and some sort of event going on in there. A DJ, a drag show, a burlesque show," said Patorti.

The duo plans on having the band Honey come back for more shows,

about every six weeks.

Also, around the six-week mark they will replace their tables with different clothing, so it's not the same clothes sitting on the tables for months at a time.

The vibe of the store is creating a low-key place to shop, but also enjoy a show or two.

"That's kind of been the vibe of our whole project is to be very grassrootsy and word of mouth," Wade said.

Their goal is to "hook some people up with a cool shirt or something," commented Patorti. Another huge part of their message is to become an "ethical thrift powerhouse" and to be accessible to the community.

Being environmentally conscious should not have to break the bank and Swainbank agrees.

"Many environmentally aware companies are really expensive to support. It can be costly to protect the

environment. Krusted Gold is doing it in a sustainable way that is easily accessible to all people since it's cheap," she said.

Shopping at a place like this is great and donating is also just as effective. Especially for college students in the season of spring cleaning. Even if fast fashion clothes are being donated, Krusted Gold ensures that these articles are still being put to use and recycled properly. Just because a clothing piece isn't wearable, doesn't mean it has lost its value.

"The bottom line is we have to do every little thing to take care of our earth even if it's something as small as getting your clothes second hand or donating your clothes it does make a huge difference and we all need to be doing it," said student and Krusted Gold customer Aspen Wood.

Community Journalism class making local waves

By Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

Students at VTSU have been making waves in the world of news, especially locally, getting stories out into the open that may have otherwise gone under the radar.

The Community News Service program started at the University of Vermont in 2019 and quickly gained traction as the program became incorporated into the curriculum in 2022 as a Community News course at VTSU.

VTSU professor David Blow, who was named one of several national "Champions" of the Community News team, is working alongside students and local newspapers to get student articles into local papers.

Blow believes that student writers are improving the quality of the news that gets out locally. In a recent Community Journalism class on March 19, he described the relationship with the region's top newspaper.

"The Herald has certainly gotten thinner," he said, noting that the paper now has only three full-time reporters. "That's why they love us right now."

He encouraged students by explaining that this program is helping local newspapers that do not have enough journalists to get to all the potential stories happening around us.

"The Post Star (in Glens Falls, where Blow worked for years) is a perfect example of a paper that could use your help," he said.

Blow advises students working on The Castleton Spartan student newspaper also and said it too is helping get local news out and popular locally.

"That freakin stack is always gone!" he said of papers he leaves in the Castleton Dollar General.

VTSU student and Spartan contributor Jack Aicher said he has seen The Spartan making its way around, even outside the Castleton community.

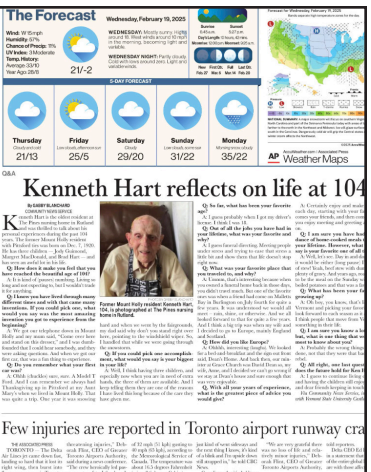
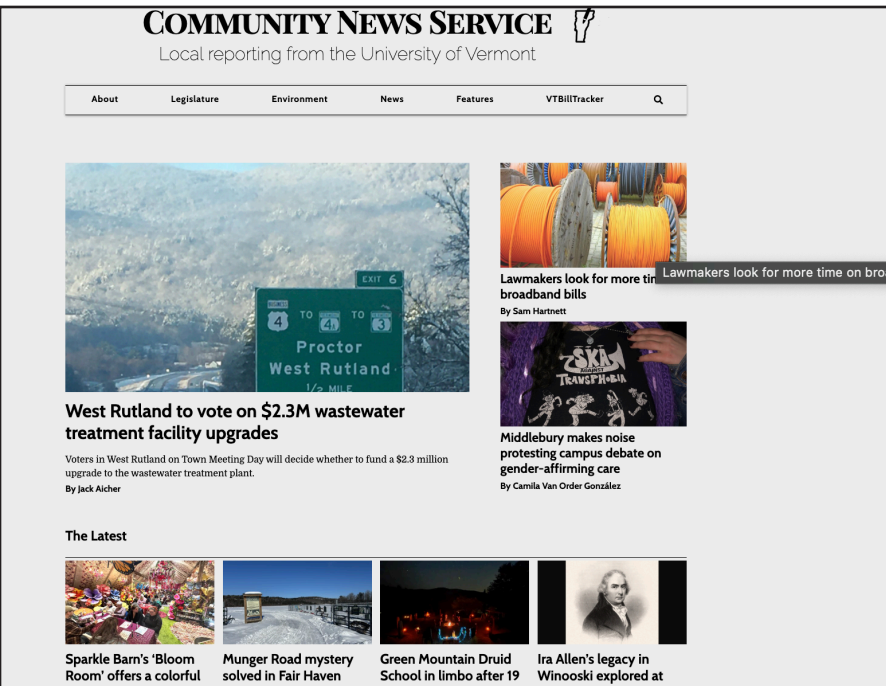
"The Spartan is getting into West Rutland too," he said.

Castleton resident Rich Byrne volunteers to deliver the paper as far as Rutland.

Many students, even if they are not necessarily majoring in journalism, said they feel a great sense of accomplishment when they have their articles published in The Spartan and in local newspapers through the Community Journalism class.

VTSU student and Spartan Editor Emily Ely has had multiple articles published in the Spartan and in the Herald.

"The more published work I have,



Many students in communications professor Dave Blow's community journalism class have been published in local newspapers including the Rutland Herald, Lakes Region Free Press, and Mountain Times.

the better. It's an awesome feeling," she said.

VTSU student and film major Andrew Martell has also had articles published in local newspapers like the Herald and said, "It was definitely a good feeling."

Fellow student Gabby Blanchard, in a separate interview, described her experience as a student journalist.

"I feel that my biggest accomplishment was during the NYC trip this year. A fellow student, Maddie Lindgren, and I were asked up in front of a group of around 70 people to speak about Community Journalism," she explained. "Not only was this an amazing experience but it led to a shoutout on the speaker's LinkedIn profile and a work opportunity by him

as well!" she exclaimed.

Spartan Managing Editor Maddie Lindgren, said during a recent class that she also appreciates the experience and claims that it has improved her writing skills.

"My storytelling techniques have gotten better," she said. "It broke me out of my shell and into better storytelling techniques."

However, keeping the effort going when the class isn't offered might be a challenge, students say. Some feel that more incentive is needed to keep students engaged in community news.

"If this could be an internship credit, I'd probably do it," Martell said.

Blow too recognizes the need for incentive and hopes to keep students involved.

From May to early July 2008, the select board planned logistics to discontinue the road, with a public hearing set for July 15 to take place at the Rutland County

mileage. It also means we have to keep it maintained one season a year, which is summer," said Bob Richards, select board chair.

Empty land near Munger and Airport Road will also be

Tattoo of the week

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

For some people, a tattoo is just a tattoo, and they just get them because they look cool or sometimes just out of impulse – because they can.

But for VTSU Castleton student Aspen Wood, it was like "the universe was kind of telling me to get this tattoo."

Wood took a semester off school in the spring semester of 2024 with the prime goal to travel and to find herself.

Wood was working at an olive farm in Rome for food and a place to stay for just over a week before she had come across a random girl named Skye.

They had met at a hostel where Wood learned that Skye was a tattoo artist backpacking through Italy with the goal to meet other tattoo artists in Italy.

the two people would part ways and just go on about their business like nothing ever happened.

But not Aspen Wood.

Solo traveling and already having a plan for where she was going from there, without even flinching or hesitating, Wood asked Skye, who mind you she had just met that day, if she wanted to travel the rest of the journey with her.

"Yeah, 100%" Sky replied, according to Wood.

They then backpacked together for two weeks from Rome to Milan, when Skye asked Wood if she was down to get a tattoo.

She was wary at first.

But after seeing the other tattoos she had done along the way, Wood said she was like "Okay she's good." She went all in, confident in Skye's skills as an artist.

Wood let her do a tattoo of the Lily of the Valley, which is a flower native to Europe and Asia.

This tattoo was a memento to her sister's birthday, because the Lily of the Valley is her sister's birth flower.

Wood showed off her pain tolerance with her first-ever tattoo landing on her ribs – and she fell asleep during process that would see most people be shaking from the excruciating pain.

"The reason I went ribs first was because I heard that's the most painful so everything after that would be easy," Wood shared.

Wood might not even feel a tattoo anywhere else as she thinks tattoos more "soothing" than anything.

Most people tend to be wary when they meet new people, especially in a different country, but for Wood, even though she did eventually part ways with Skye, this encounter was one sewn into the skin and she will never forget.

And she came back to the states with a crazy story to tell and a crispy rib tat.



COURTESY ASPEN WOODS

Aspen Woods shows her Lily of the Valley tattoo stretched across her rib.



Record Review Supertramp Breakfast in America

By Jack Aicher
Castleton Spartan

Music has a profound way of connecting with people; many listen for pleasure—others find that their playlist reflects their emotions. I admire the artistry of unique sounds and messages, as well as the craftsmanship to create modern masterpieces. In this column, I would like to share my perspective on albums spanning across all different eras and genres.

This week, I will be analyzing Breakfast In America—Supertramp’s 1979 classic and the fourth best-selling albums of that year.

Gone Hollywood #3

Supertramp was known for their uniqueness in which they arranged a lot of the 1970’s & 80’s era progressive rock with British pop; though this album expands on that creativity, using some rootsy jazz throughout. Lyrically, Gone Hollywood defines the cruel reality of living a fameless life in Hollywood, surrounded by the “creeps” and the “dumb motel(s) near the taco bell.” Though only hearing this work a few times, I quite enjoyed its message in that expectations rarely match reality.

The Logical Song #4

This piece is distinguished by its percussion. Bob Siebenberg, drummer and auxiliary percussionist, executes a series of fills that fit the overall tone of this song. The open, unmuted toms resonate with the reverby tone of the song. Though this becomes a dryer tone when the chorus hits and Carl Verheyen delivers his classic rock guitar lines. The lyrics explore ideas of adulthood and learning the proper habits to fit into society. However, in reality, the subject desires a journey of self-discovery, rather than following in society’s footsteps. The line “Won’t you please, please tell me what we’ve learned,” leaves some room for interpretation, though I believe that this verse is meant to contradict the idea of learning how to be societally logical, and/or discover one’s true self. This short lyric base is extremely poetic in that it proves a very weighing, valuable message in such a brief series of words, ultimately letting the instruments fill in the blank space.

Goodbye Stranger #5

Opening with the iconic synth organ sound, this song functions with minimal changes in chord patterns. These patterns insinuate a change though only make minute alterations to the root which brings a very strong pull to the pre-chorus and chorus. The simplicity throughout the chord progressions is an effective preface to an unhinged guitar outro in which Roger Hodgson expresses his musical freedom—thoughtfully as this song can be interpreted as one of a newly single individual. Building on this idea of being newly single, the band also plays in reference to freeing oneself from the use of marijuana; though I find this to be quite sardonic as this theme was uncommon in the rocking 1970’s. This is a very well-constructed song, and I greatly admire its divide between simplicity and excitement.

Breakfast In America #1

The carnival orchestra sound is the driving force of this song. This is one of the many songs on this album that I find to be abstract in the unique sounds that the band presents. Notably the leading title of the album references an inexperienced dreamer’s desire to pursue America. This title directly correlates to other songs in the collection such as Gone Hollywood. Expectant, the narrator sarcastically fantasizes the “delicacy” of kippers in Texas, “Cause everyone’s a millionaire.” Lyrically, there are also some references of dissatisfaction with one’s significant other, a common theme in this album. The verses speak for themselves: “Don’t you look at my girlfriend. She’s the only one I got. Not much of a girlfriend. I never seem to get a lot.” This song sits at the top of my list as a result of the musical creativity and freedom presented.

See ‘Record Review’ on page 6

International film fest evokes emotions



By Ari Cartwright
Castleton Spartan

The seats in VTSU Castleton’s Herrick Auditorium were filling up with students, faculty and local residents, eager to see films they likely would never get to.

It was the start of another

International Film Festival, organized and hosted by communications professor Sam Davis-Boyd. The festival featured showings on March 11, 13, 18 and 20.

These showings included the films “I Saw The TV Glow” (Jane Schoenbrun, 2024), “Perfect Days” (Wim Wenders, 2023), “All We Imagine As

Light” (Payal Kapadia, 2024) and “Parasite” (Bong Joon Ho, 2019).

Davis-Boyd said these films mean a lot to her and were chosen intricately based on their tones and themes.

“Most of the films I chose to show were based on personal enjoyment,” Davis-Boyd said. “However, it is important to hear the voices of other people around the world and learn about the experience of others.”

She explained how she loves hosting the international film fest annually and always hopes to “get folks to come out and see it.”

Ruben Somda, a senior at VTSU Castleton, attended the first night of the festival and saw “I Saw The TV Glow,” a film that explores unique topics such as disassociation and gender identity.

“It was a lot. I went in completely blind,” Somda said.

Somda explained that this movie made them “relive moments” in their life.

“I saw a lot of who I used

to be when I was younger. As bad as those experiences were, I am relieved to not have to live through them anymore,” they said.

This film analyzes two friends who share a deep connection with each other over a shared love for a show. The two main characters explore themselves and navigate their ways through their outcasted lives.

Somda also talked about how having Davis-Boyd as a professor has helped them to express themselves.

“One of the things that has changed me a lot by taking Sam’s classes is how she helped me to make purpose and feel empathetic. She encourages us to make weird shit,” Somda said.

Davis-Boyd mentioned hoping to be able to deeply connect with her audience during these showings, and based on reactions, she succeeded.

As a member of the queer community, Davis-Boyd talked about her connection to “I Saw The TV Glow,” with struggle in gender identity. She explains

that this movie may hold a deeper connection to “folks that are not cis.”

Somda also expresses some of these same ideas.

“If you haven’t been through a lot of it, it’s difficult to understand. I hope people watch this with an open mind, go through the feels, let it make them feel uncomfortable and sit with that,” Somda said.

Jess Emery, another senior at VTSU Castleton, attended the Thursday night showing of “Parasite.” Emery said she loves the opportunity to attend showings – free of charge – with friends.

“I wouldn’t of had the same viewing experience had I watched it on my computer in my room,” Emery said.

Davis-Boyd expressed hopes of not only getting people to connect with these movies, but to connect with each other. Those who attended, clearly did.

A dynamic space

The Christine Price Gallery of the Fine Arts Center offers a creative space for every student

By Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

The Christine Price Gallery of the Fine Arts Center at VTSU Castleton has always created a welcoming and creative environment for students, faculty, visitors and the Castleton community alike.

The space is ever-changing and vital to showcasing the current works of students. The gallery regularly morphs exhibitions from paintings, sculptures, mixed media, fashion and more.

The space is well-traveled, and passersby will often stop to appreciate the creations. Many students, however, are unaware of the history of the gallery.

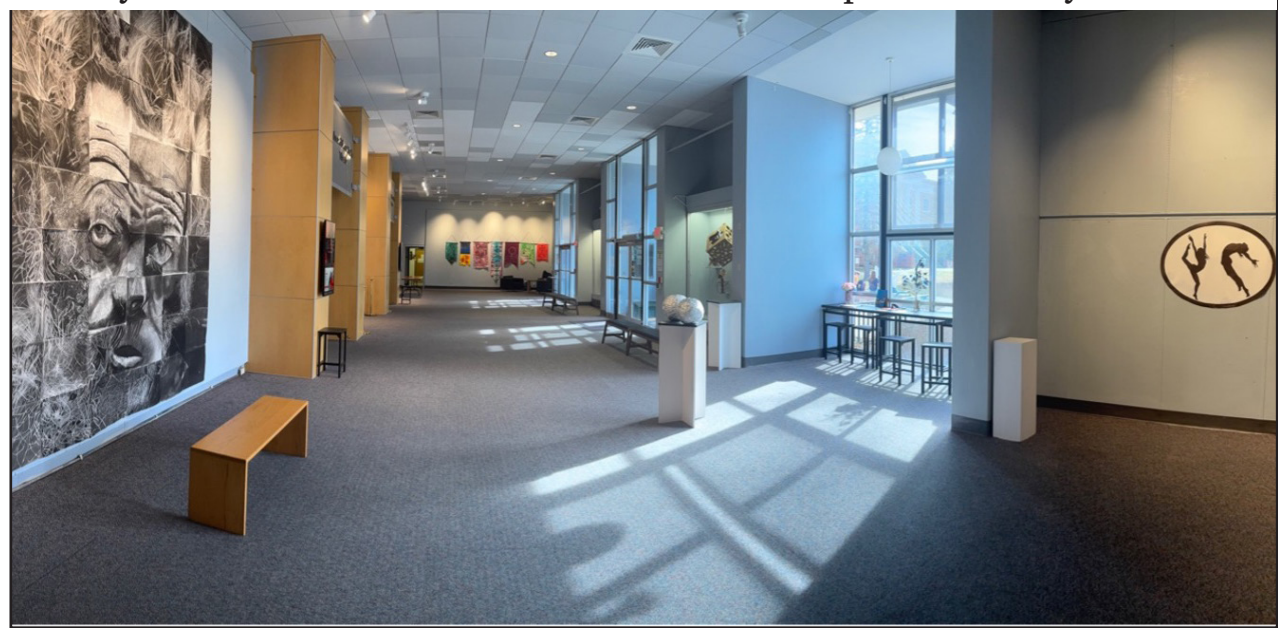
Christine Price was a beloved Castleton resident and published author and illustrator. Her artwork and writing were heavily influenced by her travels to Africa in the 70’s and ancient cultures. Her drawings beautifully capture the essence of people, often depicted in organic movement. Her research, travel, and passion for the fine arts is inspiring to say the least.

The intent for the Christine Price Gallery is just that: to inspire.

Price’s final work was her book, “Dance on the Dusty Earth,” emphasizing the beauty of dance in primitive cultures around the world. A copy sits in the office of Oliver Schemm, art professor and director of Fine Arts at VTSU Castleton. Inside the cover is a written note from Price herself, gifting the book to Schemm’s grandmother in 1979, just a year before Price’s passing. Schemm’s goal is to keep the gallery a place that continues Price’s legacy.

“I really try to showcase the talents of Castleton,” he said.

Schemm reflects on the transition to showcasing stu-



ASPEN WOOD

The Christine Price Gallery in the Fine Arts Center showcases student work, above. An autograph page and drawing from Christine Price’s book “Dance on the Dusty Earth,” below.

dent work rather than featuring solo works by local artists. Treating the gallery as a communal space has helped to give light to the current projects of students in various departments of the Fine Arts Center, he said.

It also encourages and inspires students to take more art classes.

Schemm claims that there has been a correlation between students outside of the Fine Arts program being inspired by projects and then signing up for those classes.

“There was one semester I had a bunch of nursing majors for that reason,” Schemm said.

Schemm’s outreach extends beyond the gallery, simply out of passion for creating dynamic space among the Castleton campus. From the sculptures hanging in the Student Center, to the experimental light projects in the Calvin Coolidge Library, the overall goal is for students to have pride in their work.

Azure Wood, now a student at Maine College of Art and Design, was a part of the fine arts community through the early college program the 23’-24’ school year.

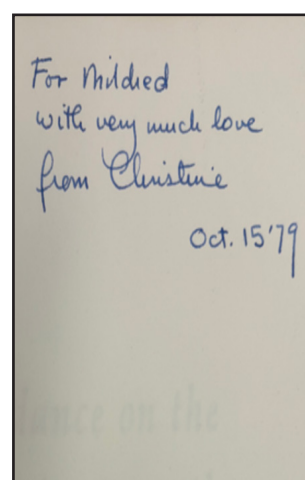
Wood participated in the Arts Institute on the Castleton campus through the Governor’s Institutes of Vermont and was later presented with a Congressional Art award by U.S. Representative Becca Balint.

“It’s always cool to see your art exhibited among so many types of mediums,” Wood said.

In her speech that year, Balint emphasized the importance of the arts. Specifically, her efforts to make art therapy more accessible. Wood claims art therapy is what her current pursuit is in her studies.

“Art in its simplest form is about connection, so I’m not surprised I’ve made such great connections at these programs and spaces,” said Wood.

Other students also feel this sentiment towards the Christine Price Gallery. Emerson



Jolliffe, who is graduating this spring, will miss the space and keeping up to date with the projects of other fine art students.

“As cliché as it is, it feels like home. It genuinely does,” Jolliffe said.

Jolliffe said she will cherish the memories the gallery holds, including just sitting and talking with friends.

Overall, the Christine Price

Art offers a place for discarded items



Pieces of Matthew Stoddard’s artwork he created in Professional Studio Arts and Painting II.

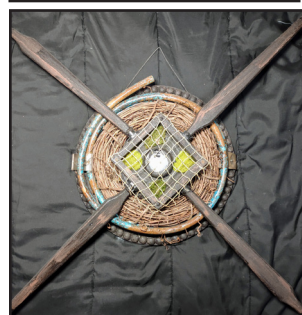
By Mathew Stoddard
Spartan Contributor

The artwork I presented is some I made for myself, some I created for Professional Studio Arts with Oliver Schemm and some I created for a personal Painting II tutorial I took with Phil Whitman last semester.

My work delves into the intersection of the past and the present, drawing inspiration

from the Japanese aesthetic wabi-sabi. This philosophy, which celebrates imperfection, impermanence and the beauty of the aged and weathered, resonates deeply with my exploration of time, decay, and the hidden charm of the ordinary.

Through sculpture, painting, collage and graphic design, I employ color theory, and color symbolism along with unique textures to create visually arresting compositions



MATHEW STODDARD

and structures.

Decay and discarded objects, often overlooked and undervalued, hold a unique allure to me. They can evoke nostalgia, remind us of the passage of time and reveal hidden beauty. By exploring these themes, I can challenge consumer culture and create works that resonate with viewers on a deep emotional level.

By incorporating tactile surfaces, contrasting textures,

and collaging illustrated and painted images, I aim to represent the ebb and flow of life through the decomposition and deterioration of both animate and inanimate things.

I seek to reveal the forgotten beauty that can be found even in the most seemingly banal or discarded objects. Through my quiet obsession with collecting and collage, I explore the interplay between the past and the present. Inspired by Surrealism and Cubism, I utilize surreal and dreamlike imagery, along with unconventional compositions, to tap into the subconscious and reveal hidden meanings.

Using my background in collage I create mixed media paintings and sculptures, building through illustration and layers of paint, joint compound, wood, metal, and various fabrics. Through the fragmentation of form, I reveal the fractured nature of the human psyche and the world around us. By challenging conventional perceptions, I aim to uncover the beauty and mystery that lies beneath the surface of reality, delving deeper into our subconscious mind.

As a financially challenged Vermonter, I have first-hand experience with the limitations of the American Dream. Our

relentless pursuit of wealth and material possessions often leads to a sense of emptiness and despair.

This consumer-driven culture, fueled by the extreme masculine ideals of money, power, and control, has created a society that values external validation over internal fulfillment. The rise of crony capitalism and the widening wealth gap have further exposed the limitations of this idealized vision, highlighting the need for a more equitable and sustainable way of living.

I believe we can find greater fulfillment by living frugally, connecting with nature, and consuming less. By repurposing discarded objects and images, I aim to challenge the throwaway culture that has contributed to environmental degradation and social inequality. Just as I give voice to the forgotten objects in my art, I hope to amplify the voices of the marginalized and the overlooked and display the enduring power of the human spirit.

By highlighting the struggles of the homeless and the downtrodden, I strive to inspire empathy, compassion, and most of all, hope for our future.

Huden:

continued from page 1

“We don’t want to discriminate against those people who might be embarrassed if they have leftover food and maybe it’s because of a health reason,” says Andy Vermilyea, professor of environmental science and chair of the Campus Sustainability Team. “We’re trying to be respectful of people, not call them out, not draw attention to people who might not have a clean plate but promote small portions and taking multiple trips.”

One challenge the sustainability team faces is the lack of awareness surrounding the dehydrator and other food waste initiatives.

“Food waste awareness was inspired by the fact that most people had no idea that the dehydrator existed,” says Nik Villalobos, an active member of the sustainability team. “They were expecting some sort of tour or story on the dehydrator when Huwden first got it, but that never came about.”

The team hopes that their efforts to publicize the dehydrator and sustainability initiatives will lead to long-term changes in student behavior.

Sodexo, the dining service provider, tracks food waste by weighing bins before processing them, allowing the team to measure the impact of their initiatives over time.

“We do currently track food waste,” says Villalobos. “The food gets weighed in the bins before it gets put into the dehydrator. Because some food has higher fat content like sandwiches, they take a really long time to run through the dehydrator. In 18 hours, the dehydrator runs, sure it’s full the first time, but that’s potentially another couple of bins that can’t go through the dehydrator, which means we end up with several bins full of wet food on top of the ones that are being run through the dehydrator.”

Ultimately, the goal of these efforts extends beyond Castleton University.

“Food is connected to our environment, our limited resources, it’s connected to energy,” Vermilyea explains. “This isn’t this one-off thing that you do in college; this is creating lifestyles for the future.”

By implementing initiatives like the Clean Plate Club and utilizing the dehydrator, the Campus Sustainability Team hopes to create lasting behavioral shifts that will contribute to a more sustainable future. With increased awareness, participation, and ongoing data collection, VTSU Castleton is making meaningful progress in reducing food waste on campus.

“I think that the biggest part is a shift in mindset that can have a significant impact beyond just individuals changing their eating habits. That change of mindset can be a huge trigger for even more impactful sustainability changes,” Villalobos said.

Greenhouse is blooming

By Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

Gardening season is just around the corner, and the greenhouse at the VTSU Castleton campus is filled with sprouts and propagated plants in preparation.

The once snow-covered windows are now beaming with sunshine, crocus have started to appear in the outside gardens, and the birds have started to scavenge around the currently empty garden beds.

The propping of the greenhouse door due to the warm weather is a sure sign that spring is among us.

“We had a lot of great events in years past and I would love to see that continue and flourish,” said professor Mary Droege, who oversees the greenhouse.

Emily Macias has been president of the Garden Club and worked hard to make the club feel welcoming and open to everyone. Macias is a senior this semester and she will be greatly missed. Her efforts will always be appreciated by club members and Droege.

Cora Godbout has stepped up to fill the position and keep the club active.

Godbout emphasizes that she’s passionate about getting

the club started back up again and just wants, “more people to feel inclined to be involved.”

She also points out that many students are unaware that the greenhouse is open to students.

“It’s a very quiet and welcoming atmosphere to do work or sit with friends,” she said.

Droege is the advisor for the club and has long put a lot of love and care into the plants. A jade plant sits proudly in the corner of the greenhouse, which Droege has had for almost two decades.

The club met this past week to propagate and transplant in preparation for the annual plant sale. This year it will be held on April 22, the Tuesday of Earth Week.

“I really do just love working with plants. It brings me joy,” club member Makayla Clement said, carefully brushing the soil of the leaves of a spider plant she was repotting.

The plans for this semester’s events are in the works, including a salve-making event with herbs grown in the greenhouse, field trips to farms and gardens, and the repainting of the garden shed. More updates will be released on upcoming events as the semester continues.



COURTESY ASPEN WOOD

VTSU Castleton students enjoying the greenhouse planting process.

What kind of bear is the best?

By Gavin Bradley
Castleton Spartan

As the weather gets warmer, more species leave hibernation and enjoy the comfortable temperatures. I mean, it’s completely understandable. The harsh Vermont winters even make the most experienced outdoorsmen want to stay inside.

However, we humans are not the only species that are excited for spring. Across the state of Vermont, black bears are starting to wake up from hibernation, and this ultimately means that there will be interactions between bears and humans.

According to the Burlington Free Press, there are between 7,000 and 8,500 species of black bear in the state of Vermont. The Burlington Free Press also gives insight into how the Department of

Vermont Fish and Wildlife accurately predicts the black bear population.

“Fish and Wildlife’s estimation of the state’s bear population comes from age and sex data from hunter harvests and non-hunting deaths of bears, such as vehicle strikes. Because the model relies on annual data from hunters, it lags one year behind the current hunting season.”

However, these populations have not always been so high. According to the Burlington Free Press, “In the early 1970s, Vermont’s bears were found only in mountainous areas and the Northeast Kingdom, and likely numbered between 1,500 and 3,500, according to a news release. Today, they’re found in every Vermont town, except for communities on the Lake Champlain Islands. The bear population has seen steady growth since 2019.”

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Service is asking the public to be cautious of black bears this summer, urging Vermonters to take the proper steps to bear-proof their property and decrease the chances of conflicts between humans and bears in the Green Mountain state.

NBC 5 interviewed Joclyn Comeau, project leader and black bear biologist for the state of Vermont.

“We encourage Vermonters to do this proactively,” Comeau said. “Don’t wait for the bear to remind you that it’s time to take stuff down.”

NBC 5 also states “Comeau’s recommendations include taking down bird feeders, keeping garbage secured in bear-resistant containers or structures, Composting Properly, using electric fences around backyard chickens and honeybees, and only feeding your

pets indoors.”

Comeau also explains her objectives further, “It’s much easier if you put these foods away before the bear finds them so that you’re not kind of teaching that bear to keep coming back for more food,” Comeau said. “We also really encourage Vermonters to share information. So, if you know that a bear’s active in your neighborhood, let your neighbors know, and encourage them to take the necessary precautions.”

According to Comeau, “We know that our bear population has been consistently fluctuating between 4,000 to 7,500 bears for the better part of 20 years,” Comeau said. “This indicates that the available habitat in Vermont can sustain a population of bears in this range. This, coupled with the public surveys related to social carrying capacity, is how we

set our population objective at 3,500 to 5,500 in the Big Game Management Plan for 2020 to 2030.” The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife sincerely asks the public to submit online reports of potentially dangerous incidents like feeding on garbage, property damage, or bears investigating areas they should not be exploring.

According to NBC 5, department biologists will use the qualitative data submitted to try and intervene early. This is all in pursuit of preventing escalating conflicts.

Ultimately it is our responsibility to ensure that we are living in a healthy environment with black bears.

We are the species with the most responsibility in this situation, and therefore, we are the species that is trusted to come up with a proper solution.

Record review:

Continued from page 5

Take The Long Way Home #2

Opening with an eerie, intense piano line, this song immediately catches the listeners attention. The harmonica in a progressive rock era is somewhat abstract from my perspective, though I adore it.

I would describe this song as a powerfully artistic anthem. Syncing the jazzy themes from previous songs in the album with a bluesy harmonica is the definition of

Supertramp’s style; they are a fresh perspective for those unfamiliar with their works and can’t help but grab the attention of the listener. The lyrics define the regret of an individual that settled down at the wrong time. They are looking for something more in life and their wife returns glance in dismay. The subject is reflecting on their choices in disappointment: “Does it feel that your life’s become a catastrophe... when you look through the years and see what you could have been.” Despite the songs

theme of reflective disappointment, I admire its anthemic structure and find it to be a piece to return to.

Child Of Vision #6
This song collectively organized all of the themes and tones in the album and was an astounding way to conclude. A grand piano solo fills the few minutes towards the middle of the song, presenting itself as the distinguished outro for the band’s accomplishment. Lyrically, this track discusses contemporary issues faced throughout social history. The

Child Of Vision is one of many that instinctually devotes their life to leisure, rather than challenging themselves. The speaker asks for them to “find yourself a new ambition” and not subject their person to the simple effortless activities of life. I find that the song is on theme in relevance to the opening of Gone Hollywood. The listener should be inspired by the artist to seize the opportunities in front of them and not let their decompressive hours inflict any influence on their dreams. This is a stellar track, and I

recommend a dedicated listen to both music lovers and anybody reading.

Unmentioned tracks including Oh Darling, Just Another Nervous Wreck, Casual Conversations, and Lord Is It Mine, continue the album’s themes of self-doubt and reflection.

I deeply admire this record and continue to return to it for a good listen. I would urge anyone interested to take the time and listen through the stories and artwork that Supertramp possesses.

Unified:

It just speaks volumes.”

One could definitely feel the camaraderie of the event through the fans and the players. Everyone involved was constantly cheering, and the players loved interacting with the fans.

There were times when a basket would be shot, and the players would call certain things out to the fans or wave their hands in search of louder applause. You could tell everyone there was having fun.

Emily Douglas, leader of SAAC, added how fun of an environment the unified game is.

“As soon as you show up at 12 o’clock to do setup, everyone’s just so happy to be there. Just the environment within

that gym for the two hours we’re in there is really good. It’s very positive, very supportive. It’s just fun.”

Douglas further emphasized the positive setting of the game.

“I think it’s just a fun atmosphere to be a part of, whether you’re an athlete, a bystander, a coach. Whatever role you had that day, you could not walk away and say it was not fun.”

The game ended with a score of 51- 42, with the home team securing the win.

Ultimately, the Unified games are a great way to bring the campus together and give opportunities to students who cannot be involved in a collegiate sport.



JASMIN TIRADO VISCALLA

Participants in the Unified Basketball Game battle it out on March 13.

Baseball starts to build confidence

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

They were down but they weren't out. VTSU Castleton after a tough 4-1 loss in gane one of a double header against RPI, came back in game 2two- from a 3-9 deficit to win the game 15-9.

The Engineers took the lead in the 4th inning with two home runs to make the game 2-0, but the Spartans were ready to clap back at the top of the 5th inning.

The Spartans had two outs with Samuel Steinman stepping to the plate and Justin Strozzyk on base. Steinman hit an absolute bomb of a home run to tie the game up, but RPI quickly recovered, tacking on three more runs to make the game 5-2.

Then before you knew it the Spartans were down 9-3 after the Engineers hit a grand slam at the bottom of the 7th but at the top of the 8th inning the Spartans come out guns blazing bringing in six runs to tie up the game 9-9

It all started with Strozzyk leading the inning with a walk, followed by Brendan Shader- hitting a single and Turner

Clews smoking a double to bring the boys home giving the Spartans serious momentum and chipping away at the lead making it 5-9.

Later, in the same inning with bases loaded All-conference star player Jackson Car- dozo gets intentionally walked as the Engineers did not want to see Dozo on the plate with bases filled with Jack Boyle following up with another walk to make the score 7-9.

Then at the 10th pitch at bat Dylan Helder also got walked scoring another run really hyp- ing up the bench in the process.

Shader then got hit for a single securing a home run for the Spartans tying the game 9-9 before Steinman got struck out to end the drive.

Mike Malloy came in at pitcher and had a great 9th in- ning pitching as he shut them down to force a 10th inning.

But this is where the Spar- tans turned up the heat cashing in on another 6 runs to make the score 15-9 and carrying this momentum into the bottom half of the inning shutting them out to win the game.

"It was a good team win," Steinman shared "It was nice to see some guys who don't nor- mally play get some opportuni-

ties." as these guys who don't get much opportunity came in and were all able to get them a piece of the cake.

It was rough start to the season playing a lot of tough southern teams but for the Spartans

"It was truly a team win ... with guys coming off the bench and bullpen, and guys making plays and getting timely hits." said Malloy.

This win was a serious con- fidence booster and is a great momentum builder for the con- ference games to come in the future.

This momentum continued for the Spartans as they came through with a tough 5-4 win against Emerson only a couple days later.

"I also hope the snow keeps out because we definitely want to throw a few home games into the schedule." said Boyle

With chemistry building, confidence building, and snow hopefully staying out of the picture, the Spartans are heat- ing up at just the right time. The rest of the conference had better have their air condition- ers on high because VTSU Castleton is coming with the heat.



CASTLETONSPORTS
Brandon Ramirez at the plate prepared to blast a homerun last season. Ramirez hit his first homerun of this season against UMass-Boston on March 22.

Wrestling season comes to a tough end

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

After a phenomenal season filled with dominant perfor- mances and high expectations, the Castleton Spartans wrest- ling team concluded its season in disappointing fashion. De- spite their hard work and ded- ication, the team fell short of their own expectations, leaving the program as a whole reflect- ing on what went wrong.

Head coach Scott Legacy wasn't happy about the team's performance, but he said he understands the performance at nationals doesn't diminish the success the program had throughout the season.

"We did not live up to our expectations. We went in be- lieving we could win the whole thing. We worked very hard for that goal, the guys were pretty healthy but the perfect storm didn't happen for us at the nationals," Legacy said. "Our performance at nationals doesn't diminish what we did all season. We had the second most guys there and we have a lot to be proud of but we're all feeling the pain and that's sports."

Coach Legacy and graduate assistant Ryan Foutz empha- sized how distinct the environ- ment was at nationals com- pared to their regular season and regional tournaments.

The acknowledged that the mental aspect may have played a role coming out the gate in the first round. But the team settled in and wrestlers found their groove in the later rounds, leaving Legacy and Foutz con- fident as the tournament wore on.

"I felt like we bounced back in the second round, winning five out of six matches, which was a highlight," Legacy said. "We tried to keep them relaxed and focused so just going over the little things in between matches was key because we wanted to keep their mental- ity right. Making sure the guys were locked in and feel- ing good going into their next match," Foutz said.

The hardest part of the day



CASTLETONSPORTS
Elijah Cyr, top, looks to get some points on the board during the national tournament. Sampson Wilkins, bottom, makes his third apperance on the national stage.

wasn't just falling short of ex- pectations, it was seeing oppo- nents crowned All-American that some Castleton wrestlers beat this season. Legacy knew his guys had a bit of pressure

on them going into nationals and Legacy felt they handled it well.

"We wrestled over 60 per- cent of the teams that were there and we beat most of the

guys who qualified as All- Americans," Legacy said. "It's hard to become All American in the sport of wrestling be- cause you have to earn it. Af- ter a win it's about realizing

it's only one match and after a loss it's about having resilience and recognizing you've got to make adjustments for the next match and our guys battled to the end so I'm proud of that."

Women's March Madness

By Annika Nelson
Castleton Spartan

Final Four picks: LSU, South Carolina, UConn, and Notre Dame

Winner: UConn
Dark horses: Kentucky, Duke... LSU?

Players to watch: Georgia Amoore (Kentucky), Chloe Kitts (South Carolina), An- eesah Morrow (LSU), Juju Watkins (USC), and the trio of Paige Bueckers, Azzi Fudd, and Sarah Strong (UConn).

I picked UConn to win the tournament last year, but they were eliminated by Iowa and Caitlin Clark in the Final Four. This year is different though.

The Huskies beat the re- igning champions, South Carolina 87-58, snapping their 71-game home winning streak. That win really cemented the Huskies as

a championship contender.

Three seed LSU is also somewhat of a dark horse. Their 3 headed monster of Flau'Jae Johnson, Aneesah Morrow, and Mikaylah Wil- liams were all named 2025 AP All-Americans.

Johnson didn't play at all during the SEC tournament, and Morrow got injured late in their semi-final game against Texas. The two have been re- habbing their lower body in- juries and are expected to return for the tournament.

My personal favorite dark horse is Kentucky at the four seed. In his first season at the helm, head coach Kenny Brooks won National Coach of the Year honors, and he re- cruited All-American Georgia Amoore, along with SEC De- fensive Player of the year Clara Strack, to join his program.

While I may be biased be- cause she's my favorite player, Amoore is the best point guard in the nation and she's proven that she can carry her team deep.

The Sweet 16 is where the first big challenge comes for Kentucky. It's very likely they're going to play USC, who is the one seed in their re- gion.

USC is led by the star soph- omore guard who is arguably the best player in the nation, Juju Watkins. They're one of the best teams in the tourn- ament, and a favorite in many people's brackets to win it all. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the other two teams I have picked to make it to the fi- nal four, in South Carolina and Notre Dame.

The South Carolina Game- cocks are the defending nation-

al champions, and they swept the SEC Regular-Season and Tournament championships for the third-straight season.

They also have the depth to repeat, as they lead the na- tion with 41.5 bench points per game.

On the other hand, the Notre Dame Fighting Irish were also one of the favorites to win the national championship this season, but due to a late sea- son slump they fell to the three seed.

This season, Notre Dame has double-digit wins over third ranked UConn, fourth ranked USC, fifth ranked Texas and seventh ranked Duke.

This tournament is going to be absolutely electric to watch, and I can't wait to see who comes out on top. (It will be UConn)

Women's lax has tough first conference game



CASTLETONSPORTS
The Women's lacrosse team was on the wrong side of UMass-Dartmouth due to a slow start. The Spartans look to garner first conference win Friday against Keene State at Dave Wolk Stadium.

Softball kicks off season in Myrtle Beach

By Lauren Fotter
Castleton Spartan

The Vermont State University woman's softball team started their season off in Myrtle beach. Playing 7 teams and 8 games they finished the Fastpitch Dreams Spring Classic with a record of 5 wins and 3 losses.

The Vermont State University Castleton softball team had an eventful series of games at the Fastpitch Dreams Spring Classic in North Myrtle Beach, S.C. The Spartans earned their first win of the season with a dominant 7-0 victory over Gwynedd Mercy University, thanks to a stellar performance from Alex Brouillette, who threw a shutout with seven strikeouts.

However, Castleton suffered a tough 7-0 loss to Mississippi University for Women

in their second game of the day, with Madison Gould taking the loss on the mound.

On Friday, March 14, the Spartans rebounded with a 6-0 win over Rochester Christian University, as Trista DeLong pitched a complete-game shutout, while the team's offense capitalized on timely hits. Unfortunately, Castleton then fell 7-0 to Lycoming College, with the Warriors' strong offensive showing in the third inning securing the victory.

The team had a mixed day of results on Saturday, March 15, at the Fastpitch Dreams Spring Classic in North Myrtle Beach, S.C. The Spartans defeated the University of Minnesota Morris 6-1 in their first game, with Madison Gould earning a career-high 10 strikeouts and contributing a 6-for-8 performance at the plate.

The Spartans' offense came alive in the seventh inning,



Madison Gould on the circle in a game last year. Gould pitched a complete game.

However, in the second game, Castleton suffered a narrow 3-2 loss to the University of Maine-Farmington. Despite an early 2-0 lead, the Beavers rallied late, scoring two runs in the seventh inning to secure the

comeback victory.

The Vermont State University Castleton softball team ended their run at the Fastpitch Dreams Spring Classic with two dominant victories, defeating the University of Maine-Farmington 11-0 and St. Joseph's University Long Island 9-1.

Madison Gould threw a perfect game with 10 strikeouts in the first win, while Taylor Russell hit an inside-the-park home run, and Gould followed up with a 3-for-3 performance in the second game to help secure the sweep. Jordan Hill, a junior commented on the trip stating, "Myrtle was full of good energy and such fun memories that will last a lifetime for our team. It was amazing to see the whole team come together and dominate the start of our season."

Upon returning from South Carolina, the team played their

first game in New England against Skidmore College. The season will feature double-headers with every opponent they face.

The Vermont State University Castleton softball team swept Skidmore College on Saturday, earning a dominant 11-0 victory in game one and a 10-5 win in game two. In the first game, Madison Gould threw a complete game shutout, allowing just three hits and striking out seven.

The Spartans capitalized on several key hits, including an RBI double by Taylor Russell and a triple by Mikayla Walsh, to take an 11-0 lead by the sixth inning, securing the win in just six innings. In the second game, Skidmore initially took a 3-0 lead, but Castleton rallied in the third and fourth innings.

Jess Heinrichs hit her first career home run, and the Spartans added five runs in the

fourth to take a 7-3 lead. Jess Heinrichs reflected on her run, "having my first homerun was an amazing moment for me. I have been struggling with my hitting but still working on it every day so feeling it come off the bat and seeing it go over the fence made me realize my hard work is paying off."

A late RBI from Francie McMahon and a solid relief appearance by Dana Elkins, who earned her first career save, helped Castleton seal the 10-5 victory, completing the sweep.

When recapping the games, junior Alexis Rogers expressed her excitement about the team's strong performance, noting how "it felt great to see every one contributing and playing well together". She highlighted the collective effort, saying it was a complete team win, with each player stepping up when needed.

MLB season is here

By Hannah Tatrow
Castleton Spartan

The arrival of spring generally means warmer weather, longer days, and the blooming of flowers, but to a baseball fan, it's a new beginning.

As someone who grew up a New York Mets fan, everyone usually chuckles when they hear me say "This will be our year". They know that I say that every year, and usually by the time the all star break roles around that optimism turns into "there's always next year".

But, that could all change this season.

After an exciting playoff run in 2024, the Mets made big moves this offseason. They signed Major League Baseball's top free agent, Juan Soto to a massive 15-year, \$765 million contract. They also revamped the pitching staff and re-signed fan-favorite first baseman, Pete Alonso.

Could this be the year they go all the way?

The Mets do play in a stacked National League East, which also hosts the Atlanta Braves and Philadelphia Phillies, two consistent playoff teams.

But the additions to both their lineup and pitching staff could make things more interesting and give the Mets an advantage they haven't seen in past years.

Of course, most eyes will be set on the defending World Series champions, the Los Angeles Dodgers, as they look to secure back-to-back titles for the first time in their franchise history.

Reigning MVP Shohei Ohtani leads a star-studded lineup, and the Dodgers pitching staff boasts some of the biggest names in baseball. They will be tough to beat.

In the American League, arguably the most exciting division race looks to be the AL East. The Boston Red Sox signed several big names during free agency this offseason, including third baseman Alex Bregman and pitcher Walker Buehler. They also acquired All-Star pitcher, Garrett Crochet this offseason in a trade with the Chicago White Sox.

However, the Red Sox will have to compete with the reigning American League Champions and division rivals, the New York Yankees.

The Yankees are a little bit more of a question mark this season than they were going into last year.

They lost Soto in free agency and didn't add any big bats to their lineup during the offseason. They did, however, add in the pitching department. They signed pitcher Max Fried and acquired reliever Devin Williams in a trade with the Milwaukee Brewers.

But, they also will be without their ace this season, as Gerrit Cole is recovering from a season-ending elbow injury that required surgery.

The AL East is also home to the Baltimore Orioles, Tampa Bay Rays, and the Toronto Blue Jays. All teams looking to be in the mix this year, so that should be a tight race.

But, the thing about baseball, is that it is a long season and anything can happen.

Sometimes winning seasons come when you least expect it, and that is what makes it so much fun to watch.

The season opens on Thursday, March 27 with a 14-game slate of games for fans to choose from.

The Lindgren Effect

Graduating senior, Maddie Lindgren, leaves her mark on Spartan soccer with an award

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

One of the most prestigious honors an athlete can receive is not only having their name etched onto an award but having an award named after them.

At VTSU Castleton, few awards bear the names of former students, and those who have received such recognition have become legends within their sports programs. Most recently, Maddie Lindgren has joined this distinguished group.

Lindgren just completed her fourth season as a women's soccer player, and as a graduation gift, her coach, Christopher Chapdelaine, has named an award in her honor. The Lindgren Award, given to the most supportive and uplifting teammate both on and off the pitch, reflects the character Lindgren exemplified throughout her four years at Castleton.

Having covered the team this season, spoken with players, and gotten to know her as a student, athlete, and friend, it comes as no surprise that she has once again gone above and beyond in her achievements.

In sports, statistics often dictate who the crowd perceives as the most valuable player.

However, athletes know success is built on much more than numbers. A team thrives when leaders create a culture of trust and support. Senior defender Lauren Fotter captured Lindgren's impact perfectly, saying, "Maddie's qualities as both a teammate and a friend are one and the same. She's always there for anyone who needs her and is everybody's biggest supporter. Her kindness is truly infectious, and when you meet her, it's clear what a remarkable person she is."



Maddie Lindgren, above left, is tossing the ball on a throw-in. Lindgren, above right, is pictured with the first recipient of the Lindgren Award, Allie Galante.

Rylee Peppin, Lindgren's best friend and teammate of four years, echoed this sentiment.

"Maddie and I clicked right away—she makes everyone feel welcome and important. Watching her find her place on the team made us all proud. I think this award truly reflects her compassion, selflessness, and energy. To know Maddie is to love her."

Underclassman Emma Kirby shared how Lindgren influenced younger players.

"If anyone should have an award named after them, it's Maddie. She pushed team-

mates to work their hardest, and if they were having a bad day, she was always there for them. The two years I played with her meant the world to me," she said.

Sophomore Allie Galante, this year's Lindgren Award recipient, added, "Coming in as a freshman, I looked up to Maddie because she was so energetic and uplifting. This year, I followed in her footsteps, supporting everyone on our team. That's what makes this award so special."

For Lindgren, receiving this honor was deeply meaningful.

"I was very honored to



CASTLETONSPORTS

have an award named after me. Coming to Castleton to play soccer was one of the best decisions I've ever made. I'll forever be thankful for my four years here, for the coaching staff who helped me grow, and for my best friends I had the privilege to play with," she said.

A coach's words carry weight, but when a player leaves a legacy so profound that their name becomes synonymous with leadership and camaraderie, the impact is undeniable. Chapdelaine spoke to just how much Lindgren has meant to the program.

"Maddie is a tremendous human being! She is kind, caring, intelligent, a model teammate, hardworking, and driven. She embodies all the characteristics we look for in our players. We name awards after athletes whose impact reshapes our culture and elevates our standards, and Maddie has done just that," he said.

The fact that an entire group of teammates feels Lindgren is their biggest supporter speaks volumes about her character. It is a rare feat to be so universally beloved, and this award is a fitting tribute to her lasting impact.

Skiers have solid showing at Nationals

By Jack Aicher
Castleton Spartan

The Spartan ski teams returned from the 2025 USCSA National Ski Championship last week with impressive finishes across multiple events. The event was held at Mount Bachelor in Bend, Oregon, where the teams faced the top universities from across the country.

"It feels good to be back," said Christopher Eder, head alpine ski coach at Castleton. "We put a lot of time and effort into making it to nationals. It was a long trip, so it's always nice to come back with some hardware and some really good individual results as well."

Despite facing their share of challenges before and during the races, both teams stayed focused. After suffering late-season injuries and difficult snow conditions, the women's team was able to secure a spot on the podium as one of the top teams in the country.

"The women's team finished second overall—second in giant slalom and third in slalom," said Eder. "The only team that beat them out was Rocky Mountain College, an NAIA school that offers athletic scholarships, which we can't as an NCAA Division III school. So, they can say they're the top non-athletic scholarship team in the country, which is cool."

The women's team reflected on their experience racing out west, highlighting their moments together as a team.

"My skiing wasn't as strong



CHRISTOPHER EDER

The team gathered in Oregon for nationals.

as I had hoped," said Emilie Stene. "But at the same time, I'm happy that I finished and that we skied good as a team and were rewarded for it."

The men's team also faced a share of obstacles, though still held on and came close to the slalom podium.

"With the men, we had a bit of bad luck on the first day in the giant slalom—only two finishers that day, which meant our third spot was a penalty time," said Eder. "I was thinking out of 27 teams, maybe we're going to be 20th at that point, but the two guys who did finish did quite well—enough to put us in ninth place."

"In the slalom, we were 1.02 seconds off a podium spot. That's how tight it was," he said.

The championship gave Castleton's athletes a chance

to celebrate their achievements while also considering areas for improvement.

"Personally, I think I could've skied better," said Aksel Stroem-Hansen. "The first slalom run was good, but I struggled with the soft snow. Skiing is a sport where there are many things that can go wrong and the faster you go, the more things can go wrong. It wasn't the best skiing I've ever done, but it was good overall."

The weather played a big part in the racers' results, after cancellations due to storms and unfamiliar snow conditions, though the teams kept a proper mindset and pushed through.

"The conditions were rough," said Eder. "In the giant slalom, we had two guys lose their skis early in the course."

The incoming snow had a big impact on the racers, leav-

ing the course in difficult conditions.

"You couldn't see three gates in front of you," said Stene. "I was bib 42 and by bib five the course was already beaten up."

Not only did the conditions affect the team's ability to race—it also altered the coaching plan.

"Normally, I'm on the hill during races, but due to scheduling, they wanted me to set the (other) course while the women were racing," he said.

Although this changed the team's plan, they were quick to adapt and work together to ensure their success. Two teammates stepped in as substitutes while Eder was setting for the next races.

"I had to turn my radio over to Jack Conneely, one of our freshmen who wasn't racing," said Eder. "He did a fantastic job videoing and giving course reports up to the start. A lot of credit goes to Jack for what he did there."

"Lisa Davis, who is our grad assistant, was at the start with both the men and the women and Kevin McDonough helped out tremendously as well," he said.

Looking ahead, these men and women are determined to finish this season out and return to nationals next year with their eyes set on the top of the podium.

"We still have a few races coming up—we're racing next week and then the following week, so we're really trying to maximize the last six races before the season is actually over," said Nathaniel Hazen,

ski racer for Castleton.

"I'm going into my senior season, the only thing I want is for our team to get a win at nationals," said Stene.

The Spartans' mindsets going into the championship gave them the resilience to adapt to challenges, connect as a team, and also set their sights on next season's races.

"This is one of the best teams I've ever had as far as camaraderie and work ethic. No egos, no attitudes—just a group that supports each other," said Eder. "At the end of the day, if I knew nothing about these guys, I couldn't tell who won the race and who didn't—they've all got smiles on their faces."

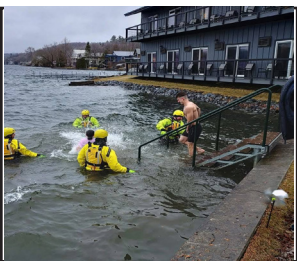
The teams clearly support this mindset, practicing it on and off the slopes.

"After Karleigh's slalom run, she came skiing down and we were waiting to hear what her time was. We were all standing, hugging, smiling, and laughing together even without knowing the time," said Stene.

"It's been so important having each other through every moment," said Andrea Rodriguez. "It really helps take the pressure off."

The entire team has shown their support for one another as well as the coaching staff.

"I'm super grateful to have been part of this team and for the hard work of our coach Christopher Eder," said Stroem-Hansen. "He works around the clock—I've never met anyone that spends that much time on their coaching job. It's been an honor."



NEWS

Students test Lake Bomoseen water in a polar plunge for charity.
PAGE 3



ART

Artist Abigail Wentz creates fun colorful artwork to make people smile.
PAGE 5



SPORTS

Over spring break the men's soccer team took a trip to Scotland.
PAGE 7



Castleton, Vermont

Friday, April 25, 2025

CASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Maher sisters take to the mic

Two Castleton grads and their Olympian sister make noise in the podcast world

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

The House of Maher is what you get when you combine three crazy funny women with a knack for storytelling and an obsession with sister FaceTimes.

It's a one-of-a-kind, unfiltered podcast where sisters Ilona, Olivia and Adrianna Maher share everything from intimate life confessions to hilarious stories.

Born and raised in Burlington, the Maher sisters bring their unique personalities and life experiences to the mic — and they are not scared to shy away from anything. From childhood birthday parties in grocery store aisles to big life questions about self-worth and mental health, the sisters have built a space where laughter and vulnerability go hand in hand.

"We wanted to do it right," said Adrianna Maher, a 2021 Castleton University graduate. "What inspired us was our sister's video calls — we always have such a blast. I feel like we're our funniest selves over FaceTime."

And that FaceTime energy is exactly what listeners get. One moment you're listening to Adrianna's feud with neon signs outside of restaurants, and in other moments you explore deep conversations around anxiety or how working out and having some time off for yourself can influence the lives of people.

"We talk about literally everything," Adrianna said. "I know how lucky I am to even be in a space where we have a podcast that people want to listen to. And so, it's been a cool time. I'm very grateful for everything."

The Mahers are a close-knit family and each member brings a very different personality to the table. Ilona is the Olympic rugby player, huge social media personality, and Dancing with the Stars runner-up. She brings confidence and quick sarcasm.

Olivia is the oldest sister and also a Castleton graduate.



YOUTUBE

Two Castleton graduates, Olivia Maher and Adrianna Maher, left and right, and their Olympian sister Ilona, star in the new podcast, House of Maher.

She's the creator of the viral "Girl Dinner" trend, is unapologetically quirky and very creative.

Adrianna Maher is a New York City human rights activist with a gift for insight and is the youngest of the three.

The sisters may now be spread all over the country — Ilona and Olivia in California, Adrianna in New York — but their bond has never been stronger. Their podcast is not just content; it's a connection for them.

"It was just kind of the perfect project to start together and just be able to be sisters even more," Adrianna said.

Vermont makes regular appearances — whether it's

heartfelt memories from their small-town childhood or shout-outs to quirky Vermontisms that only New Englanders will understand.

"I'm always going to be a Vermonter. Vermont will always have my heart," Adrianna said. "We had a really good public school education there, and my mom, Olivia, and I all went to Castleton."

Professor Dave Blow, who taught both Olivia and Adrianna at Castleton, isn't surprised the trio is taking over the podcasting world.

"Liv was very outgoing... she was everywhere," Blow said. "She played guitar on the steps of Woodruff and made up a song to the tune of '12 Days

of Christmas.' She was a lot of fun in class."

He remembers a hilarious Feature Writing blog assignment of Olivia's that had her classmates, and him, howling. She called the blog "Liv Sips," which she would write after a glass of wine or two.

"It was hilarious," he said. "People were tuned in to hear what she had to say."

Adrianna, meanwhile, left a quieter but lasting impression and her time at Castleton was marred by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"She was deep, but also funny. One that sticks out to me was something she wrote for a COVID Chronicles blog

about taking the senior year thing too far — doing puzzles at home like she was a senior citizen," he said.

Some of her entries for the class assignment were turned into a book by Blow called "COVID Chronicles."

Blow says what makes the Mahers special is their mix of humor, heart and authenticity.

"They come across as this cool, normal-ish family with good values," he said. "They're good people, raised right. It's one of the coolest things about being a professor — seeing students like them take off."

Blow isn't the only teacher at Castleton who holds the Mahers in high regards.

Professor Michael Talbott remembers having the sisters in class as well.

"Liv was one of those students who was exceptional from the beginning, a great contributor to class work, really engaged, jumped at every opportunity, involved in everything," Talbott said.

The sisters' dynamic is strong, thanks in part to their openness and communication.

"We're very vocal people," Adrianna said. "So, if we have an issue, we're not stewing on it. Let's fix it. Let's figure it out."

Their creative process shows the trust they have in each other.

"It's wonderful to work with them," she said. "We already have such a great foundation together... there's always a way we can figure anything out."

While Olivia and Ilona are more used to sharing their lives online, Adrianna admitted she's more cautious.

"I've always been very aware of privacy and anonymity," she said. "Olivia and Ilona have already shared so much. So, they're less afraid, but I'm getting the hang of it more."

Still, the sisters are committed to honesty and authenticity.

"We're telling our stories unfiltered — little thoughts and situations that remind people: everyone feels this way," Adrianna said.

That balance of serious and silly is what makes "The House of Maher" feel like a hug — with a side of sass.

"We want to build something lasting," Adrianna said. "More seasons and more episodes that people can come back to — a place where our three voices shine."

Whether they're diving into awkward dates, recounting bizarre moments, or tackling heavy topics with grace and grit, the Maher sisters are a trio you'll want to hang out with again and again.

"The House of Maher" is available now on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube and wherever you get your podcasts.

Fireside cuts wait times

By Drew Koval
Spartan Contributor

For students at Vermont State University Castleton, long waits at Fireside Café were once a daily struggle.

Some students would spend up to 40 minutes in line just to grab a meal between classes.

But this semester, things are changing. Fireside has upgraded its grab-and-go hot food system, aligning it with the café's most popular menu items, reducing congestion, and making mealtime more efficient.

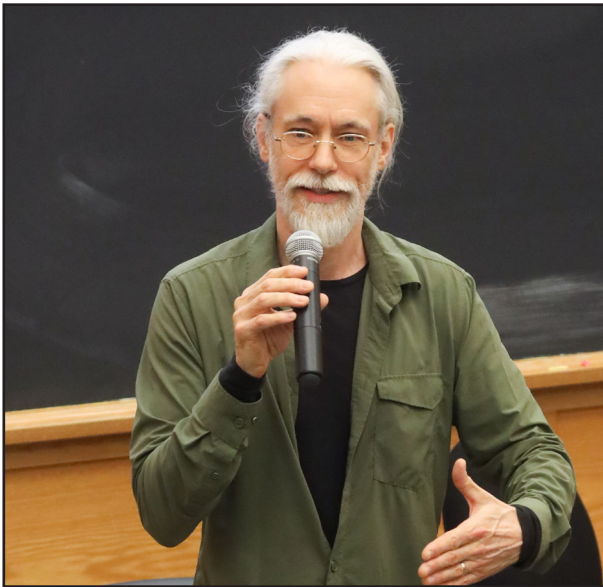
"We saw that certain menu items were ordered way more than others, so we thought, why not just make those available for quick access?" said Fireside staff member Ian Edgar. "This way, students can grab what they actually want without standing in a long line."

And students have noticed the difference.

"It used to be so frustrating when I had a one-hour break between classes, and I knew there was no way I'd get my food in time," said senior Cam Frankenhoff.

See 'Fireside' on page 6

Faculty and students discuss political climate



ETHAN PROSPERE

Philosophy professor Brandon Lalor introduces the presentation.

By Amanda Johnson
Castleton Spartan

A concerned crowd of faculty, staff, and students gathered for the first of a series of events about the state of our democracy and the importance of staying involved and informed as much as possible.

The presentation titled 'This is Not Normal and It's

Huge', which is part 1 of the 'Teaching in the Present Moment' series, took place in VTSU's Herrick auditorium on Mar. 28. It featured professors and students who are heavily involved in educating others about the political atmosphere.

The event was the first of a three-part series, a series which is also part of Public Philosophy Week.

Prof. Brendan Lalor introduced the presentation and

stated that this was not a rally for any political party but instead was meant to pose one question: "Our topic question: Is the government breaking laws?"

Prof. Rich Clark officially began the discussion by stating that the gathering was not meant to rally against anyone, but rather to help people understand the processes by which our political system operates.

"This is not a partisan matter that I'm addressing today," Clark said. "I'm hoping that I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about policy at all."

Clark explained the importance of staying informed about what is going on around us, especially among younger people.

"If you're under 25, this has been your political reality," he said. "You have no life before Donald Trump. It's hard to imagine that this is not normal."

VTSU student and activist Andy Cole pointed out how those who speak out against the government are punished.

"We have seen college students who are the age of many people in this room being punished for speaking out and be-

ing vocal," Cole said.

Cole also described the experience of being a transgender individual dealing with the current political climate.

"So, I am a transgender student. I lived in an area that was not very forgiving to people," Cole said. "But there's a big difference between the people in my town criticizing me for my identity and my government purposefully going after me."

Cole passionately stated how the government is trying to eliminate minority groups that do not coincide with their agenda, essentially erasing the progress our democracy has strived towards.

"You have a government body that is purposefully trying to make an enemy out of a minority, and also that encourages the erasure of their mention," Cole stated. "It's not up to a government to decide what kind of person is allowed to exist or what kind of person it will choose to recognize."

Dr. Jacob Park challenged the notion that what we are seeing is not normal. He pointed out that what we are facing may not be so different from what we have seen in the past.

Park argued that the constitution has made for years of

social injustice and that this is not the first time we have seen administrative abuse of power.

Clark agreed, mostly with Park's viewpoint, but also countered by pointing out that the current president may be the first that be "anti-constitutional", whereas others have not caused this kind of concern for democracy.

Cole stressed the urgency for everyone to keep themselves involved and informed considering the overwhelming situation we are facing.

"They are trying to overwhelm you with so much new information and constant information that you become complicit with the changes," Cole said.

According to Cole, the best way to combat the constant abuse and false information by the powers that be is to stay vigilant and involved in any way possible.

"The best thing you can do at this time is vote for your senators, call your local reps, go to protests, and organize with your community," Cole explained. "There are such small actions you can take every day as a form of protest because you are existing. You are consciously existing while being engaged."

Thin is back in!

If you're chronically on-line and immersed in gym culture like I am, you've probably noticed the rise of wellness as a trend. It's everywhere, marketed as self-care, self-improvement, and the ultimate lifestyle upgrade.

Seems innocent enough, right? Wrong.

Social media has a way of serving you everything you've ever shown the slightest interest in, all at once.

You'll like one video of a girl crocheting a hat, and suddenly your feed is flooded with content about the best yarn, beginner patterns, and common crochet mistakes. The same algorithm applies when your hobby is fitness; except the stakes feel much higher.

Watch one video about a new yoga pose or click into the comment section of a "What I Eat in a Day" TikTok, and suddenly, your recommended page is overtaken. "10,000 steps MINIMUM!" "You're not a dog, you don't need to reward yourself with treats." And, of course, the age-old classic, "Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels."

Welcome to SkinnyTok.

An entire corner of the internet is dedicated not to health, but to thinness. It's a place where discipline is often just extreme diet culture in disguise, and where "wellness" morphs into a masked obsession with control. Eating disorders, which were long recognized as dangerous, debilitating illnesses, are suddenly trendy again.

Influencers package disordered behaviors as aspirational lifestyles. They glorify 1,200-calorie meal plans as "just enough" and share workouts designed to burn off every meal. They post "what I eat in a day" videos that feature bone broth for breakfast, a cucumber with cream cheese for lunch, and two hard boiled eggs for dinner. They make starvation look effortless and desirable.

And it's working. Young audiences, especially impressionable young teens, consume this content daily.

They start questioning their hunger cues. They feel guilty for eating normally. They believe that eating less and working out more is the secret to success, when in reality, it's a gateway to exhaus-

tion, malnutrition, and, in the worst cases, lifelong damage. I saw an 11-year-old posting what she eats in a day on a "calorie deficit," eating a total of 533 calories in one day.

The sheer amount of conflicting information posted online about wellness makes it impossible to know what's real. One fitness influencer swears by eating your bodyweight in protein, while another claims fiber is all that matters. One person insists heavy lifting is the key to getting lean, while the next warns that weights will make you bulky. Who's right? Who's wrong? The truth is, most of them are just repeating trends.

I don't know the exact point of this editorial, but it upsets me seeing the promotion of undereating and extreme fitness as a trend.

I get it. Even on my good days, my mind is often flooded with similar messages.

Even though I know better and even though I've spent years figuring out what works for me, I still struggle and I know that is the case for many.

It's hard to trust your body when you're craving a piece of dark chocolate, but an influencer's voice in your head whispers, *nothing tastes as good as skinny feels* as soon as you pick up the fork.

Health is important. But what does that even mean anymore? For some, fitness is about aesthetics. For others, it's an emotional outlet. And for many, it's simply a way to move.

For me, it's all three.

I imagine my future self, 67-year-old Emily, thanking me for building strength so she can bend down without needing help from her granddaughter. She's grateful for the muscles that let her stay independent. She's relieved she no longer fears an occasional slice of chocolate cake. And I know she's happy; still doing yoga, still walking, still feeling good, not because she spent her life undereating but because she chose balance over obsession and starvation.

Wellness shouldn't be a trend. And eating disorders should never be aspirational.

-Emily Ely



JOE VYVIAL

Guest Essay:

Dispelling some Wellness Center myths

With finals approaching, the unpredictable weather, sicknesses, and political/world issues, the stress is heavy right now.

Then to add to all of this: three students passed away this academic year. Maybe you knew them, maybe you didn't, but either way, it's hard for anyone on campus to say they weren't affected.

It's exceedingly apparent how much pressure students are feeling and though there are similar struggles, we all have unique experiences that contribute to the stress we may feel.

The Wellness Center is here to offer support during this crunch time. Simply, we provide free mental health counseling, nursing services, and wellness education to all students remotely or in person from 9-4 p.m. Monday through Friday during the academic year. If we can't do it or have it, we'll find a referral or resource to get what you need.

I've heard a few rumors that may have students reluctant to stop in so I hope to make some clarifications:

We don't share student information without their consent unless there is a serious health or safety risk: This is sometimes frustrating for family, faculty and staff, but unless a student gives us permission to share, we can't (and happily don't) give information. We want to feel like a safe space for students to come and share their concerns. We only break confidentiality if someone is in serious risk of danger AND only report to a program that we believe can reduce the risk. This doesn't mean an automatic report to the college or family, but more likely to an outside medical/mental health agency.

We don't send students on "grippy sock vacations" if they say they're suicidal: First, we do not determine if someone will be hospitalized. A community crisis worker or the hospital itself determines that. Second, if a student is reporting they are having suicidal thoughts, that is not an immediate crisis screening. We are here to explore with students why these thoughts are occurring, provide coping skills, and bolster the positives of alternative options. The only time we will conduct a crisis screening is if a student states they have a plan on how they will kill themselves, have intent to follow through with killing themselves, and/or will not or is unable to agree they will be safe if they are on their own. That's the only time we will have community crisis screen to determine if hospitalization is necessary.

We do have "real" counselors: I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has been practicing psychotherapy in the community since 2015. We have a licensed mental health counselor, a rostered psychotherapist, and two master's level mental health counseling interns. We are all trained (or being trained) to provide therapy at a professional level that is equal to what you would receive off-campus. The caveat is we are a short-term solution. Our services are mostly available only during fall and spring semesters and we cannot work with students after they leave or graduate. We work with students to get to a stable place (or better!) and if it looks like they need support beyond what we can give, we refer to more long-term services.

In short, we're here for the students. Let us know how we can offer support to you individually or on a larger scale. Feel free to contact me by emailing Jacqueline.eddy@vermontstate.edu, call 802-438-1346, or stop by.

- Jacqueline Eddy
Associate Director of Health and Wellness



DAVID BLOW

A recent meeting of the Castleton Spartan student newspaper had 18 students in attendance.

Journalism is thriving at VTSU Castleton and it makes me proud

A few weeks ago, I was sitting in the back of the TV studio in the Communications Department and smiling.

I was there for the weekly *Castleton Spartan* newspaper meeting, and I was smiling because there were 18 students in there with me.

Again, this was a meeting of the school newspaper and of the 18 students there, only four were receiving course credit for being there.

So, despite my subpar math skills, even I know that 14 students had showed up at the meeting because they WANTED to be there to contribute to *The Castleton Spartan*.

I've been attending weekly meetings with the newspaper staff since 2005, and I don't recall ever having such a packed room.

There have been meetings with only a handful of students, with all getting elective credits for being there.

That's what made this day so special for me, hence the smile.

But it wasn't a fluke.

Subsequent meetings have seen consistent double-digit

numbers of students packing the room also. And remember, we're in a time in history where newspapers are struggling, right?

They're dying, right?

Teens get their news from social media feeds like Instagram and TikTok and local news from YikYak, not newspapers or newspaper sites.

So, how do we explain this enthusiasm at the weekly Spartan meetings?

There are some who probably need content for their capstone portfolios, but there are also a lot of first-year students who seem to be having fun sharing their stories and columns about everything from the joy of playing music with a twin sibling to hope for a Mets World Series.

And what is intriguing a bit to me is there are numerous students who aren't even communications majors. We have business majors, English majors, even psychology majors.

Maybe it's the status of the world we live in right now that is drawing them in.

Maybe it's their peers, who are having fun working on the

paper and are luring others in to join them.

Maybe it's the lure of the byline.

They get published once and love that feeling and want to get it again.

I can relate.

I still enjoy looking up my old Spartan clips from when I was a student in Professor Terry Dalton's classes in the late 1980s. I also vividly remember getting published for the first time in *The Rutland Herald* and I still have the clip in a scrapbook.

I love the momentum of *The Castleton Spartan* and I love that the print version of it is widely read in the area, thanks in part to the delivery efforts of local resident Rich Byrne, who takes copies into West Rutland and Rutland every other week for no compensation.

I deliver them too, throughout Castleton, including huge stacks at the Dollar General store that are always gone when I return in two weeks.

I drop them at the post office, the diner, the bakery, the deli, Third Place, the hair salon, the Senior Center and the

Mobil. Students help deliver them all over campus and on the day they come out, it does my heart good to see open newspapers shielding faces in classrooms or in lobbies.

Students in my Community Journalism class are further having an impact on local journalism having produced over 30 stories for area news outlets including *VT Digger*, *Rutland Herald*, *Mountain Times*, *Lakes Region Free Press* and *Poultney Journal*. Some have even garnered front-page coverage.

Having lived through the high times of journalism – before the internet – I'm not delusional in thinking we'll be returning to that impact. But I can tell you I am savoring the involvement and impact VTSU Castleton students are having on the region now and I am loving seeing a full room of interested students working to keep that impact going.

- David Blow
Advisor of *The Castleton Spartan*

Check us out
online at
castletonspartan.com



CASTLETON SPARTAN
STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Managing Editor
Maddie Lindgren

Copy Editors
Emily Ely
Gabby Blanchard

Sports Editor
Stone Stelzl

Page Designers
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Maddie Lindgren
Emily Ely
Stone Stelzl
Gabby Blanchard

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Reporters
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Advisor
David Blow

The Spartan is the official student newspaper of VTSU Castleton. It functions to inform, educate and entertain readers accurately and responsibly. The University, its administration, faculty, student body and staff are not responsible for the content.

You’re not alone, the struggle rut is real

Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

The time has come for one of the most bittersweet months of the whole school year – the last one.

Some find this time of the year to feel the longest, as stress of finals takes over and the excitement of being done feels like someone waving candy in front of a toddler.

“I am stressed, but very thankful that it is almost over because it’s been a year, to say the least,” VTSU student Kierra Rice said.

Others are feeling happy during this time because they are looking forward to getting closer to their future goals.

“I am most excited about the end of the school year because it gets me a step closer to achieving where I want to be in life!” VTSU Nursing student Kallie Haynes said.

It can be a lot sometimes to try and juggle the life of a college student, especially this time of year. Some find it easy to get caught up in the mindset of being done, but the one month left still holds big importance.

For most students,

days are spent by waking up, going to class, studying, and then repeating it all over again the following day. That schedule makes it crucial to find an outlet to use as a way to relax and ease the mind.

Claudia O’Connor finds talking to her community of friends to be a good motivation, especially the ones going through this same stressful time. Like O’Connor, Haynes finds her motivation through her community too, with her family as her biggest support system.

“My family is the thing that is helping me get through the semester because they are always there for me and always push me to do my best,” she said.

“Many students say the struggle is real and many say they have not related so much to this phrase until now. For O’Connor, the biggest struggle is juggling assignments while the demand of studying for tests is growing.

For Haynes, the biggest struggle right now is finding her motivation when the end is so close. Similarly, Rice explains her struggle with motivation too, but she has found great help at the on-campus

Wellness Center, along with some much needed visits from the best doctor of all, Max the cat!

Although struggles are very much real for these students, one good thing about the last home stretch of classes is that beautiful spring weather is finally coming into play.

“One thing that helps get me out of a rut that comes at this point in the year is really making sure to stay active and get outside. The fresh air definitely helps clear my mind,” O’Connor said.

The key to getting yourself out of an end-of-the-school-year rut is to find the things that make you feel energized during a time that can, more often than not, be very draining.

“I try to find time to relax, spend time with my animals, go for a walk, and enjoy the fresh air,” explained Rice.

It is too close to give up now! Only a few weeks away from becoming a step closer to career goals, which is the greatest motivation for Haynes.

“Taking the time to remember why I am in school doing what I’m doing, (to help others) helps me to keep going,” she said.



COURTESY OF CLAUDIA O’CONNOR
Claudia O’Connor staying active and decompressing outside.

Freezin’ for a reason

Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

The choppy waves of Lake Bomoseen were measured at just under 40 degrees on the morning of March 29. A biting wind swept across the water’s

surface, adding an extra chill to the already cold air and doing little to calm the nerves of the spectators gathered along the shore.

Olivia Day and I exchanged one final, reassuring embrace before following our fellow

VTSU Castleton students down the stairs into the dark water.

Anxious and cautious steps were followed by a count to three, a brave leap, and then a rush of laughter as we sprinted toward the hot tubs to warm up

again. Participants fought for a space in the warm water, trying to shake off the cold and reclaim feeling in their toes.

“I’m honestly feeling refreshed and reset after the shock,” Day said.

That frigid spring morning,

students and local community members alike showed up to the Lake Bomoseen Lodge and Taproom in support of the Cario Shriner’s annual “Freezin’ for a Reason” fundraiser.

The event, which invites participants to jump into freezing water for charity, supports the Shriners Children’s Hospital. The hospital provides specialized care for children, regardless of their families’ ability to pay.

Jason Coltey has been a Shrine Mason for the past 25 years. He said charity events hosted by the Vermont Cario Shriners currently benefit 23 local hospitals. The polar plunge in particular raised funds for important procedures and treatments provided at the Shriners Children’s Hospital.

“We’ve had worse conditions in the past,” Coltey said. “Despite the conditions this morning, we still had a great turnout which is really awesome.”

Coltey said past plunges have occurred when the lake was still frozen over. Though this year’s event was less extreme, the experience was still a first for many, making it a significant personal challenge.

“Without a doubt, yes,” said VTSU Castleton Student Government Association President Thomas Kehoe, when asked if it was the coldest water he’d been in.

“I think it comes close to a cold plunge I did in January. But my body wouldn’t know the difference. Cold is cold,” Day said with a laugh.

Safety was a priority throughout the event, with members of the Castleton Volunteer Fire Department stationed in the water, fully suited in protective gear.

“We’ve got gear on, but even we’re still cold,” one

Castleton first responder said, emphasizing the severity of the temperature.

The event was brought to Castleton’s attention through sign-ups sponsored by the Student Government Association, and Kehoe led a group of SGA participants.

“Turnout was good. Honestly, I feel very happy with the crowd we got,” Kehoe said. “We had a lot more sign-ups than turnout, but at the end of the day, the weather was pretty bad, so I don’t blame anyone for not coming. It was electric like everybody’s been saying.”

Though most participants were strangers at the start of the day, the shared experience of enduring the freezing waters brought everyone together quickly.

After emerging from the lake, people huddled in the hot tubs; grateful for the warmth and bonding over the challenge they had just faced.

“I have done cold plunges, but this one felt like it was more meaningful because I wasn’t doing it for myself. It was for a greater cause, and I got to do it with people I care about, which felt really special,” Emma Patrissi said.

There was an overwhelming amount of gratitude that day. One community member even extended his gratitude in his offering to buy drinks for students after the event. After braving the waters of Bomoseen, participants sat in towels and hats inside the Taproom to chat.

“Thank you to everyone that showed up today,” Coltey said, “We’re just extremely grateful.”



ASPEN WOOD
Castleton students, above, huddled up on a chilly day at Lake Bomoseen preparing for the plunge. A brave student, top, faces the freezing water of Lake Bomoseen head on.

Castleton’s IT Department is here to help

Ethan Haggerty
Spartan Contributor

Walking into the IT Department in Room 164 of the Stafford Academic Center, you are welcomed with immediate caring greetings, smiling faces, and above all else, eagerness to assist you with any technological issues.

“We are more than happy to help if you stop by, send us an email, phone calls, or even text,” said Kyle Hutchins, the technical support lead across all VTSU campuses.

Hutchins is located on the Castleton campus in the IT Department and is always geared to help when he can.

“We are here for you,” Hutchins added in a sincere tone, while also highlighting how the IT Department is a great resource for all VTSU students, faculty, and staff members. “If students are having any issues, please let us know.”

Alongside the endless support for students and staff, the

IT Department provides student work opportunities.

“You don’t have to be a computer major to be a student worker,” Hutchins said.

The position pays \$15 dollars an hour, and offers both work study funds, and international student funds, allowing for truly anyone to work there.

Chinny Okeke, a graduating computer information major, who is also an international student from Nigeria, weighed in on how beneficial the IT Department has been for him in building not only his experience, but also forming a sense of community while at Castleton.

“There are three student workers, and we are all close friends,” Okeke said.

He also discussed that when there is an issue one of the student workers doesn’t know how to fix, they help each other in solving that problem.

“They are the first line of defense,” said Hutchins, adding that student workers are who faculty and students see if

there is a problem.

The workers will either go out to the physical space the issue is occurring in, or they will assist remotely.

Jonathan Czar, the network administrator for VTSU who has also worked on the campus for 31 years and is retiring after this semester, discussed a similar sense of community, but in a different light.

“Students will learn from each other with new technology,” said Czar. “There is a great team that works here.

“And students would be surprised at what we’d do to help, even if they need help with their online games,” Czar stated with a laugh.

Hutchins added to that thought.

“We might not be able to help you with writing your paper,” Hutchins stated with a grin. “But you can send an email, a text message, or even walk-in for help.”



ETHAN HAGGERTY
Chinny Okeke works on a laptop in the IT office.

The Castleton Confidant

Got drama? Dilemmas? Deep, dark secrets? The Castleton Confidant is your anonymous advice guru, run by an Editor at The Spartan. Whether you need help, a fresh perspective, or just someone to vent to scan the QR code and spill it all. We're listening.

How do I figure out what I want to do I'm a sophomore majoring in business but I don't see myself in a corporate job sitting in a desk all day I want a job that makes a lot of money and that isn't sitting on a computer typing or reading

-Confused Chameleon

Dear Confused Chameleon,

The first thing I want to tell you is that you are not alone. Seriously. Even people who seem totally confident about their major and their "future" are having these same doubts behind the scenes.

In my experience, and something that I will never shut up about, is often when one first gets to college, they might feel like you've got a decent idea of what they want to do in the "real world." But as they move through college and especially as they inch closer to graduation, that big picture can get fuzzier instead of clearer. I guarantee if you asked a senior right now if they felt like this, they would agree.

There's so much pressure to have your whole life figured out, and it doesn't help that this pressure starts as early as high school. But you're a sophomore. Trust me when I tell you that you have time, even if it doesn't feel like it. You have space to explore, to try things out, to fail, to succeed, and to pivot. That's one of the best parts of college.

My advice to you is to try and learn more about things you don't enjoy doing, instead of trying to find the perfect niche in the endless business landscape.

I actually used to be a business major too, so I totally get where you're coming from. And let me just say, business doesn't have to mean "cubicle life" or endless spreadsheets. Business is everywhere. Think about it; art galleries, ice skating rinks, fashion labels, music festivals, gyms, coffee shops, tattoo parlors, wellness retreats, sports teams, the list goes on.

All of those places need someone who understands how to manage money, grow an audience, market their services, and keep things running. Every industry, every passion project, every cool little niche has a business side. That means your major can open a lot more doors than you probably realize right now.

I get that you want something dynamic, something that makes good money that doesn't have you sitting behind a desk all day. That kind of job does exist. You just might not have heard about it yet, or you might not know someone who's doing it. Try taking classes outside your comfort zone. Go to random speaker events. Talk to people with jobs that sound cool even if they're not in your major. Sometimes you stumble on your "thing" in the most unexpected places.

I know it's hard to feel confident when everything feels so uncertain. But trust me when I say that everything will eventually fall into place. Keep moving, stay curious, and give yourself grace. You're doing better than you think.

Good luck Confused Chameleon. You got this.

- The Castleton Confidant

Lamy dedicated to drums, higher education

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

On the second floor of Leavenworth Hall going toward the faculty offices, you will find an office at the end of the long hallway about the size of an efficiency kitchen filled with a couple of Beatles posters, cannabis posters and a wall filled with books.

In this office you will find an older, slim gentleman wearing a sweater vest with a button-up shirt underneath, some kakis, and comfortable looking slip-on shoes who has a passion for music and the history of the counterculture of the 1960s-70s.

Like many in the boomer generation, this man began consuming cannabis while in high school and he has been a proponent of legalization since that time.

He is Phil Lamy, a sociology professor at VTSU Castleton, one of the creators of the university's cannabis program and a drummer in a band.

Lamy is a multifaceted man who some would call "a professor's professor," said VTSU Castleton colleague and bandmate Brendan Lalor.

Lamy is also a married man who has been married to his wife Whitney for 43 years. They have two daughters along with three grandchildren who Lamy loves to spend time with.

When he is not failing at getting his grandchildren to watch Looney Toons cartoons, a normal day for Lamy consists of teaching part-time at VTSU Castleton, where he has been for 33 years.

He is 69 years old and is easing into retirement. Instead of full retirement, he chose the option to step down from full-time teaching for half the pay. He no longer must attend meetings, but he can continue to do what he loves in the classroom for as long as he can.

Lamy teaches a sociology and anthropology courses as well as classes in the hotel resort management program in Killington.

He also manages the Cannabis Studies Certificate program at VTSU Castleton, which he launched with Lalor in 2019.

The program has been a hit with students, with slots filling quickly. Some students who



COURTESY PHIL LAMY

Sociology Professor Phil Lamy is a drummer, a founder of the Cannabis Studies program and a good friend of philosophy Professor Brendan Lalor.

were not able to get in the class even "came and sat on the floor just to be in class," he said.

He also teaches the Cannabis, Culture and Consciousness class, which consists of him giving lectures about detailed historical accounts of cannabis. He is passionate about educating everyone on cannabis.

VTSU Castleton student Carly Centeno, who has taken this course, recalls Lamy as a "super chill guy" who was able to captivate in class and who cares a lot about what he was teaching.

"And it shows," Centeno said.

Lamy is open and not embarrassed to discuss his canna-

bis use and experiences.

"Drinking and smoking ages are too high, no pun intended," Lamy said with a chuckle.

Lamy has been blazing since he was in high school during the counterculture era of the late 60s and early 70s, which took hold of him like it did with many others.

"I have always consumed cannabis," Lamy said casually, adding that these days, he even grows his own.

Lamy is so passionate about educating people on cannabis that he was even a part of the 2015 Vermont debate on it. He fought all the false information about it, like it being addictive.

Through his efforts and efforts of others, it led to the legalization of marijuana in the state of Vermont.

But cannabis is not the only thing that Lamy is passionate about.

Music consumes him and he's a huge Beatles fan, which stems from his childhood.

Lamy was born in 1955 in Salem, Massachusetts, known to others as the witch city. He grew up with his mother and father, who were both musicians, and seven other siblings.

"My father forced us to learn how to play," said Lamy, who has been playing drums from an early age and played in the family band called the

Lamy Family Entertainers. He and his brothers later broke off to form the Lamy Brothers Band.

But Lamy was different, and also played sports while he was in school, which kind of made him feel like a little bit of an outsider from the band as they were all focused solely on music.

But while sports are no longer part of his life, he still plays the drums every day.

"I can't play basketball. I can't even run, but I can still play drums," Lamy said jokingly.

see 'Lamy' on page 6



Wyatt Rochon, Bruce Waite, and Sebastian Sheehy (left to right)

Remembering our friends

After learning of the passing of two VTSU Castleton students this semester, students and faculty members who knew Bruce Waite and Wyatt Rochon were asked to reflect and offer a tribute to them. Comments regarding Waite came mostly from Intro to Journalism class students on a discussion board written moments after they learned of his passing. Comments regarding Rochon were collected from a posting on social media and the poem is from Professor Jeanne-Marie Morrissey. And Sebastian Sheehy was memorialized through tattoos garnered by his friends and featured in Tattoo of the Week.

For Bruce: I'm still not sure how to transfer my thoughts into this discussion. However, there is very little I wouldn't do to have Bruce interrupt our next class discussion with a quirky fact about the world around us. This is what I admired most about Bruce, his willingness to speak his mind.

-Henry Robertson

I'm absolutely heartbroken to say the least. I think it just serves as a reminder that we need to be unconditionally kind to one another, we never know what someone is going through. Everyone is

fighting their own battles, everyone has struggles. I aspire to be as sociable as Bruce, and I know I speak for everyone when I say I will deeply miss him. I struggle a lot with depression. Bruce and I had a funny conversation last year connecting over the fact that we were on the same antidepressant. I cannot help but think of what we can do to try to support his family and loved ones closest to him. I am sending my love to everyone.

-Aspen Wood
See 'Bruce' on page 6

For Wyatt: There are no words to describe how truly missed Wyatt will be. Being able to see Wyatt almost everyday since the first semester has been such a blessing in my life. Wyatt's the kind of friend who always pushes you to be the best you but also always had your back. Wyatt's been one of the most genuine friends I've had and never failed to make me laugh. Wyatt has touched many lives at Castleton and will be forever loved and missed."

-Mariah Lamothe

I was Wyatt's suitemate, and every day I would see him he would always put a smile on my face with a quick joke or whatever it was. He was a great guy who I will remember for the rest of my life. Rest easy my friend."

-Anonymous
See 'Poem for Wyatt' on page 6

By Isiah Hughes and Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

This week for the Tattoo of the Week, we highlight a tattoo gotten by three friends in memory of their best friend Sebastian Sheehy, who died last semester.

Sometimes, a tattoo is more than a design. It's a lifeline, a memory, and a tribute to someone who left a mark far beyond the skin.

For VTSU Castleton students Erin Forkin, Phil Malazarte, and Emerson Jolliffe, their matching tattoos are a permanent memorial to their beloved friend, Sebastian Sheehy Sheehy, known to his close friends as "Seb," tragically passed away, leaving behind a profound emptiness in the hearts of those who knew him.

To honor his memory, his friends chose to get the name "Seb" inked in Tengwar, an Elvish script from The Lord of the Rings, one of Sheehy's greatest passions.

"The first time I met Seb was at Dungeons and Dragons," said Erin Forkin, one of his closest friends. "I had just started dating my boyfriend Tony, who had been best friends with Seb for years. The first thing Seb did was point out my Lord of the Rings tattoo, and we instantly clicked."

Seb's love for fantasy worlds, especially The Lord of the Rings, was a defining part of his personality. He and Erin could talk for hours about Middle-earth lore and dive into the most obscure fan theories and videos.

"When I showed him my deluxe Lord of the Rings book set with the gold-bordered pages, he was the most excited and interested out of anyone," Forkin shared. "We bonded over that more than anything."

Sheehy wasn't just a fan of fantasy, he was a genuinely kind, funny, and thoughtful person who made his friends feel safe, heard, and supported.

"He was truly one of the most caring people I've ever met," Forkin shared. "When I was first learning D&D, he



COURTESY EMERSON JOLLIFFE

Philip Malazarte and Emerson Jolliffe showing their freshly matching tattoos in honor of their friend Sebastian Sheehy.

was the only one who could teach it to me in a way I understood. He never got impatient. He would always get up and come over to help me."

Sheehy's generosity extended far beyond the gaming table. "When I didn't have a car, he'd always offer me rides," Forkin recalled. "No matter how much gas money I tried to give him, he

wouldn't take it—he'd rather I buy him Fireside instead."

Phil Malazarte, another VTSU student and friend, met Seb through the SOS group on campus. Though they weren't initially close, their bond grew over time.

See 'Honoring Sebastian' on page 6



The QR code to scan if you have a submission for the Castleton Confidant.

Album Review: KISS ‘Dynasty’

By Jack Aicher
Castleton Spartan

Music has a profound way of connecting with people; many listen for pleasure—others find that their playlist reflects their emotions. I admire the artistry of unique sounds and messages, as well as the craftsmanship to create modern masterpieces.

In this column, I would like to share my perspective on albums spanning across all different eras and genres, ranking songs in order of enjoyment. In this issue, I will be diving into Dynasty, a 1979 hit album by KISS.

I Was Made For Lovin’ You #2

Starting, this song opens the album with a bang, daunting the listener with a heavy snare drum through the nostalgic vinyl crackle. The nostalgic chord progression instantly draws me in to listen over again.

The song later bridges with a heavy open bass drum line and what I assume is a synth lead, followed by a drum fill that any drummer will feel in their soul. The brief guitar solo grabs and sets a suitable tone for the album.

The message within the lyrics, though self-explanatory, is quite provocative, opening the record with KISS’ most thematic topic: romantic and physical desire.

2,000 Man #8

Originally written by “The Rolling Stones” in 1967, this piece is anthemic with its repeated guitar riff and steady bass drum in the KISS-interpreted version. Ace Frehley reworks the 60’s original with a surprising, grunge-like edge.

The lyrics leave room to interpret, though it can be understood that the artist sees the world changing around him and perhaps fears losing the ambitiousness of his 1960s self: “My kids, they just don’t understand me at all.”

Sure Know Something #1

This song is a personal favorite of mine. It pulls away from the band’s original sound in the introduction and breaks into the iconic KISS lines in the chorus. Undeniably catchy, this song is also carried heavily by a bass guitar line that follows a close melody to the vocals.

The retro sounds from the vinyl pull the listener deeper into this song, resonating with many different tones and leaving the audience reacting to a sequence of unexpected sounds. The lyrics describe the reflection of the artist in correlation to a lost lover.

The line, “you showed me things they never taught me in school,” of course, nods to the band’s intimate lyrical themes. The relationship with this person left the artist feeling “paralyzed” as if not wanting it to end.

Dirty Livin’ #3

Another anthemic piece, the backup vocals inside of this song carry the melody with an aggressive crescendo that enables a soulful resonance. The song’s placement within the album is more than ideal, pushing into the second half with some excitement and confidence. The bassline bridge repeats often and is essential, walking down the key and breaking from the song’s funky rock pattern.

This track also pulls away from the rock aspect of this record, carrying more of a disco-funk-pop beat. Lyrically, this Dirty Livin’ references a different side of the band, hinting at signs of addiction—though the band was known for steering clear of drugs and alcohol, with some exceptions noted in their history.

Charisma #6

I admire the transition between Dirty Livin’ and Charisma, though I find the chorus in this song to be overly repetitive. The vocals in the bridge resemble the tone of Billy Idol, which draws me in as a fan of his. Lyrics carry very little weight in this song as the chorus is repeated frequently, though the grand scheme questions the artist’s lover as to what attracts them: “what is my charisma?”

See KISS on page 6



ABIGAIL WENTZ

Vermont State University Castleton Art student Abigail Wentz said she likes to create art that makes people smile.

Making art to add whimsy to dark world

By Abigail Wentz
Spartan contributor

I find creating art to be my source of therapy, my time to break away from the world and free all the thoughts that bounce around my mind. Illustrating onto paper or sculpting into a form using clay allows me to take my thoughts and turn it into something tangible.

My hope is that the things I create cause joy, bring a smile

to someone who needs it, or even in some small way, make that morning cup of coffee taste a little bit better.

I keep creating because I want to add a little whimsy to this dark world. We all need a little more laughter and a lighter side to things. I create for myself, but I love that others can enjoy it too.

5 years ago, is when I really began to draw animals. Starting as simple pen sketches

and overtime adding in color. I began learning how to paint with watercolors. I don’t use traditional methods per say, but I love how the medium looks.

You can make it realistic or cartoon, washed out or solid. I love seeing how much you can layer until the paper says, “No more, please.” I see it is as a medium that is easy to travel with, I take it with me wherever I go.

When I am drawing it’s

hard to say where I get my ideas from. I mostly draw animals portraying anthropomorphic qualities, partaking in human tasks of some sort.

Sometimes I think I choose to create animals because I think they understand more than we humans realize. My art gives the animals this small chance to be heard and considered. Just because they can’t speak doesn’t mean they don’t experience and share emotions

and thoughts.

Around the same time, I began my journey of learning how to throw clay on the pottery wheel. It is something I never imagined doing. It’s the whole rhythm and process that I love. It’s a beautiful melody of movement as well as relaxation all balled into one.

Each step is so magnificent from greenware to the finished product. I love the clay in every form and stage it goes



MARTIN VANBUREN III

The cast of “Hamlet in Concert” performed scenes during a recent run of the play.

Hamlet a great success

By Clay Barcelos
Castleton Spartan

I sat in the middle row of the Casella Theater throbbing with anticipation. It was the opening night for the much-anticipated “Hamlet in Concert,” directed by Marisa Valent-Atland.

I observed the proscenium in front of me, frantically chewing four sticks of gum in apprehension. My eyes were peeled wide open, ready for a night of theater.

“Hamlet” itself is a play as old as time. It comes from an ancient Viking legend told throughout Scandinavia about a young Amleth, who plots revenge on his uncle, the current king, for killing his father who was the former king.

From then on ensues a political, vocabulary-laden plot with several murders.

The story of Hamlet is so popular it’s pretty much ubiquitous. It has been adapted into several films including The Lion King, The Northman, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. Most male protagonists in fantasy/medieval/sci-fi stories are iterations of Hamlet.

Take Luke Skywalker, for instance. A handsome young twink sees his family and home planet brutally destroyed and seeks to fight the force and overcome it, who turns out to be his father. Familial betrayal as a plot twist in fiction probably became popularized by Hamlet.

Some serious praise is deserved for the cast of Hamlet.

The main actor, Ben Robinson, delivered a tour de force of acting power. His gravitas reminded me of James Dean in “Rebel Without a Cause” or Al Pacino in “Scarface.” Robinson easily outshines today’s contemporary actors. He could wipe the floor with Timothee Chalamet.

The actress who played Ophelia, Carissa Chalinor, also did an excellent job.

I believed her acting when she got emotional and teary-eyed. I walked in expecting mediocre acting just based on the fact that none of these people are professional actors.

But I was pleasantly surprised when the cast pulled off the magic trick with convincing dexterity.

Another highlight was Ken-

drick Madore’s performance as King Claudius. He looks more like a Norse god than a college student so his physical features certainly helped. But when he bellowed out the wordy, thick, molasses-drenched dialogue, I bought every word of it.

The musical moments I could give or take. I’m not a huge fan of musicals unless it’s something like the South Park movie.

The music was ok. Personally I cannot vibe with the showtune energy of the music. It has no swagger, no funk, and no interest. Why do all musicals feature songs that are always in the same genre?

Hamilton pushed the mold a little bit, but not far enough. I want to see black metal musicals, hyperpop musicals,

psychedelic musicals, and hardcore hip-hop musicals like “Suicideboy\$” or “Wu-Tang Clan.”

Overall the play was a great success. The endless hours of rehearsing seemed to have paid off.

I was entertained the whole time, and so were the people sitting near me.

An elderly couple behind me enjoyed the play so much that the man howled with glee.

No one was on their phone with the brightness on, which these days is a positive.

Coachella doesn’t disappoint, features mega-stars

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

This past weekend wrapped up the first weekend of Coachella 2025.

The annual music festival is known for its big names and even bigger performances. This year included headliners Lady Gaga, Green Day, Post Malone and Travis Scott.

Lady Gaga opened with “Bloody Mary” from her 2011 album “Born this Way.” Gaga is known for her outrageous outfits and stage presence and Coachella 2025 was no exception.

She was first seen in a white feathery look with claws and fishnets. The custom look was designed by the label Fecal Matter. She had several cos-

tume changes, which is very on par for a Lady Gaga performance.

Gaga’s closing song of her headlining performance was “Bad Romance” accompanied by fireworks at the end.

Green Day had a memorable performance as well. The U.S. punk band opened with their song “American Idiot,” from 2004 album of the same name, during which lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong changed the lyrics to “I’m not part of a MAGA agenda,” which was met by a roar of agreement from the audience.

Shockingly, this was the first time Green Day had played at Coachella, although it could not be a better time considering they’re known for their political commentary.

Travis Scott opened his set



Lady Gaga performs at Coachella.

with “Crush” the song off Playboi Carti’s album.

His live performances are known to be a blend of experiential art, so this year’s Coachella headline was highly anticipated.

He then went into a classic

mix of a lot of his throwback tunes (like SICKO MODE, a crowd favorite) allowing for guest appearances from Future and Lil Uzi Vert.

He also made a couple live debuts of unreleased songs like “Oh Jacques” and “She Going

Dumb.”

He ended the night with “Telekinesis.”

Post Malone hit the stage Sunday night, the last night of Coachella weekend one. He opened with “Texas Tea” off his 2023 album “Austin.”

Later in his set he introduced “White Iverson,” the song that kicked off his fame almost 10 years ago, by saying “Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you my only good song.”

He closed out his set by performing the 2018 hit “Sunflower.”

The first weekend of Coachella had amazing performances with some amazing messages behind them and it leaves everyone that much more excited for what is in store for Coachella weekend two.

Kiss:

Continued from page 5

Magic Touch #4
I enjoy the scaling guitar line as well as the notably heavy drum line throughout this song. This piece doesn't disappoint in lyrics, catch, instrumentation, or variety in any sense. It separates itself from the other popular songs in the album, setting it high on my list. It is a solid listen from start to finish, making a few pattern changes which works in this case, would otherwise take away from the consistency of the album.

Hard Times #5
Similar to Magic Touch, the differentiation in beat and pattern in this song is quite enjoyable. I find that this song sits ahead of its time as, like 2,000 Man, it features a chorus that feels reminiscent of a grunge sound that would later emerge in the 1990s. I find that KISS assort a variety of rock eras into this song which, although not making it higher on my list, is a positive trait.

X-Ray Eyes #7
I don't find that this song separates itself from others in

this album I would still find it a significant place in one of my playlists. I found that the lyrics were the determining factor in my appreciation for this song. The creativity behind the lyrics: "I've got X-Ray Eyes, and I can see right through your lies," grabs me and leaves room for contextual interpretation, with a straightforward message.

Save Your Love #9
I don't find this song to grab my attention in comparison to that of the other eight song choices, leaving me somewhat disappointed in the ending of the album. I think that a rearrangement in the song sequence would greatly enhance the listening experience of this album, however, the exit verses from instruments and closing drum solo are strong and carry an exciting and upbeat tone for the final moments of the record.

This record is both a classic and a personal favorite of mine and I definitely recommend giving it a listen, especially for those who appreciate 60's and 70's era rock.

Unapologetically me

By Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

As I started to sit down and write this paper about my perspective of turning 19, I found myself in a negative mindset. After taking some time to reflect on how I want this new year of my life to go, I decided to google "Journal prompts for reflecting on an upcoming birthday."

After looking through a list of about 30 different prompts, one stood out to me. I felt it was a more positive way to express my reflection on this past chapter of my life.

So, welcome to my journal entry and thank you for reading what I'm calling "How I have grown and evolved over the past year?"

Thinking back to when I turned 18, I can automatically recall a difference in my life. Many connections I had have faded, new ones have evolved, academic goals have been achieved, mental health has gotten better, and most importantly, my view on life has been beyond eye-opening for

my past self.
This year I met people that have absolutely changed my life, 100% for the better. Surrounding myself with people that make it easy to be I truly am is one of the greatest things that I have received in my 18th year of living.
Surprisingly, lost connections can be a gift too. Through this past year, I have gained the mindset of seeing a lesson in all the events that happen in my life. Practicing this has allowed for that growth in mental health that I mentioned earlier, allowing myself to now see how when something unfortunate happens, I can use it to help my mind reflect in the future.
I used to find myself struggling with the fact that I don't find as much joy in the "typical college activities" as most around me do.
I would feel embarrassed, looked at differently, or seen as "not fun."
This year, I realized that there is no point in trying to impress or please others for my own happiness. The thing I



COURTESY PHOTO

Gabby Blanchard discusses turning 19.
needed was to surround myself with those who value my priorities as well.
I was listening to a podcast one day by a girl named Chloe Trca, and she said something that did a complete 180 on me, and I have used it in my daily way of living since. She talked about being so unapologetically yourself, that you don't have to "work" when you are around those who you encounter, putting on a different version of yourself.
The 18th year of my life has had the biggest impact on how I view the value of life overall. The hopes and dreams I hold for my future have been building since I could remember and continue to expand every day. However, it truly wasn't until this past year that found my confidence in my own values, priorities and views in life.

Honoring Sebastian:



EMERSON JOLLIFFE

"Seb" written in Elvish is shown on Philip Malazarte as a dedication to his friend.

Continued form page 4

"I did know him, not much at first, but I got to know him throughout the year," Malazarte said. "He invited me out to go do stuff, but I would have prior commitments. It bummed me out, and it bums me out even more now."
Malazarte vividly remembers the moment he learned about Sheehy's passing. "I was at work at 8 a.m. when my friend just called me, like, 'Hey, he's gone.'"

It was very unexpected and makes Malazarte wish he could've hung out with Sheehy more. "This tattoo is a memorial to him," Malazarte shared "I wanted to make sure he left his mark on whatever is available and I'm available, so why not?"
For Emerson Jolliffe, Seb's loss is something that continues to be deeply painful. "Seb was genuinely one of my closest friends. To say I loved him would be putting it lightly," Jolliffe said. "Losing him was

and is one of the hardest losses I've ever had to manage. I'm still struggling a lot with the giant hole he left in our lives."
Jolliffe believes the tattoo holds more than memory it holds presence. "Getting the tattoo, for me at least, was a way to not only keep his memory alive but also genuinely feel like in a way, he's still here with us. It's like even though he's physically gone, there's a piece of him with us at all times," said Jolliffe.
In his senior yearbook,

Sebastian wrote that his one wish was to be remembered. Through the ink they carry, his friends have made that wish come true. He'll be remembered not just for the Elvish script, the Lord of the Rings quotes, or the knight's gauntlets he once wore around campus but for the kindness, laughter, and light he brought into the world. And now, wherever his friends go, Seb walks with them, etched in Elvish and in memory, forever.

Bruce:

Continued from page 4

From Ethan Haggerty
I did not fully get to know who the real Bruce was.
I never will.
However, I got to know the side of Bruce that was in class. What I can personally say about him is that the classroom was absolutely never quiet when he was there. Whether the conversations were about him having to save some out-of-state idiot in a Tesla that failed going down his logging road, or his love-hate relationship, more hate, with 12-page scientific papers, Bruce's energy was contagious.
Before Dave would get to class, Bruce would often complain about having to interview three people for his most recent story. This was not because he was lazy; Bruce was a hard-working person for his logging company. He was very open about that, and it is something I admired about him. His ability to focus not only on his course load but also working as hard as he did is truly incredible.
Bruce was a person I never got to know on a personal level. However, I'd like to think he shared plenty of stories to the entire class during lecture time so that we could piece together who the real Bruce was.
You never know what someone is going through. You

never expect to wake up on a Monday morning like normal and get ready for the day, unknowing that someone who should be doing the same, isn't.
There will always be a missing person in this class, and there will always be a missing contributor to society.
Thank you, Bruce, for your bigger-than-life personality and your inspiring outlook on life. You will be missed more than you know.
From Celia Baker
I didn't know Bruce very well, but this is still so heart-breaking to hear. He always had a smile on his face, and always tried to make others laugh. He sometimes would walk with me back from class and talk about his day and how I was. He always would talk about his girlfriend and how much he loves her to me. He would say how beautiful and funny she is. He also said I wear a lot of pink. He once saw I was a little stressed and made sure to talk to me after class to see if I was all right. He even tried to make me feel better saying that he did the same thing, or he didn't do the best either on something. Before leaving he would always say I'll see you next class, have a nice day, or I'll see ya. He had goals from the way he spoke about his life, and he seemed

to be a hard worker. He knew what he wanted and would go for it. He was very confident and didn't care about what others thought. From knowing him for this little while you could tell he cared about others and was a nice person.
From Dean Dugan
I knew Bruce for a while. He dated a girl in the Upward Bound program. I got to know him much better last semester during the gap between my classes. We and another student would both wait in the lobby of Leavenworth. We would have conversations about fiction and things that have happened in history. Sometimes, when grabbing lunch at the Fireside, I'd see him there and eat with him.
This semester, I was surprised to find he was also taking this class. He was always friendly, talkative, and welcoming. He would take charge of most of our conversations in our class. He had interesting ideas for his stories. He wrote about mechanics' stories about college kids' cars. No one had expected him to pass away so young.
From Brookelyn Kimball
"When I think of Bruce the first thing that comes to mind is his bubbly personality and

the contagious smile he flashed at me every time I passed in in the halls of Leavenworth. I met Bruce at the beginning of the school year in the Leavenworth lounge where we shared many deep conversations as well as thousands of laughs. He was always ready to chat with me when I would arrive at the lounge, even if I was supposed to be doing schoolwork. I always ended up chatting with him during my hour break. He had one of the biggest hearts I had ever seen and it showed in how he communicated, he made you feel heard, and appreciated. I couldn't even come up with one bad thing about him because he was always spreading positivity wherever he went. Bruce was one of a kind, and extraordinary soul, and each day I sit in Leavenworth to do my work, I think back to my time spent here with him, and I wish I could go back. A bright and shining light is now missing from my day, but knowing I got the opportunity to know the real Bruce is something that pushes me to keep going even though I miss him terribly. His positive impact on me is something I wish to continue to spread throughout campus, he will forever live through the lives he touched."

Poem for Wyatt

By Professor Jeanne-Marie Morrissey

*There were many dark days
That came our way,
Ice building up on the windshield,
15 more minutes to go
Before it melted.*

*When I got there,
Perhaps you sat
In the middle of the room,
Or was it just to the left side
You looked up
With cellophane eyes
Crisp as that winter...*

*For some reason,
The cold was too much for you.
The conversations you blocked out
Looking up at the ceiling—
What were you thinking?*

*Your life, too brief
It was only a matter
Of waiting until the sun
Stayed all day,
And winter would retire, again.*

*But you didn't realize the season was only passing,
The eclipse we saw
Doesn't happen all the time,*

*Just a few more weeks,
This is not really permanent.
Couldn't you see?*

*No, you walked out of the classroom,
No one knew.
Why didn't you just adopt a homeless puppy,
Instead.*



ETHAN PROSPERE

The grab-and-go hot food system at Fireside.

Fireside:

Continued from page 1

"Now, I can grab a burger or tenders and be on my way. It's made a huge difference in my day."
The improved grab-and-go system has also helped staff keep up with demand during peak hours.
"Lunch rushes were always chaotic," Edgar said. "Now, since more students are using the hot food machine, we can focus on getting fresh orders out faster for those who still want something made to order."
Even students who don't use the grab-and-go option as often say they appreciate the changes.

"Honestly, even when I want a custom order, the line moves quicker now because fewer people are waiting," said grad student Jonah Janaro. "It's just a better system for everyone."
While the improvements have already made a noticeable impact, Fireside staff say they will continue monitoring the process and adjusting based on student feedback. For now, one thing is clear, long waits at Fireside Café are becoming a thing of the past.
Do you have feedback on the new system? Fireside wants to hear from you! Drop a comment in the café's suggestion box or speak to a staff member about what you'd like to see next.

Lamy:

Continued from page 4

His musical inspirations and favorite bands include Earth, Wind, and Fire, The Beatles, Chicago, Steely Dan and the Doobie Brothers.
Lamy's passion for music also took him to many places including two semesters in London, where he played music, and to Cuba, where he got to see buskers perform and where he studied Afro-Cuban music and Latin percussion.
You can now find Lamy playing with fellow colleagues Andre Fleche and Brendan Lalor in a band called the Green Brothers Band. They play local venues including Castleton's Third Place.
"When the singer stepped out, I stepped in," Lalor said.
Lalor sees Lamy as an encouraging person who "puts wind in the sail of things."
Through playing in a band together, a friendship has been formed between Lamy and Lalor and Lalor said he considers him "the closest thing to a brother at Castleton."
Lalor met Lamy in 2008 when he began teaching at VTSU Castleton. He joined the band in 2014 after the old singer stepped down.



PHOTO CREDIT

Tim Egan, Cannabis Studies graduate Oliver Duncan, and Phil Lamy attended the New England Cannabis Convention in Burlington.
Fleche, a civil rights and U.S. history professor and the guitarist of the band, has been at VTSU Castleton since 2006 and has been playing guitar since he was 14. But he didn't start playing seriously again until 2020 after COVID struck.
Fleche sees Lamy as a wise mentor and knew he was a talented musician as well as a gifted drummer. Fleche feels as though he has been able to grow as a musician since he has known Lamy.
Fleche asked Lamy if he wanted to play sometime, and this led to Fleche becoming the band's guitarist and through their shared interest in music it led to them becoming friends with Lamy.
Lamy is "a good friend in general," he said.
By day Lamy is a professor who loves to educate others about sociology, anthropology and marijuana. By night, he's a gifted drummer of the Green Brothers and avid partaker of the devil's lettuce.
As "mini lectures" can begin anytime, Lalor said, you can be sure that the professor's professor will leave you with a lasting impression as well as a little bit of a contact high if you're lucky enough.

Baseball trying to find their groove for playoffs

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

After riding high on a seven-game win streak earlier this month, the VTSU Castleton Spartans baseball team hit a bump in the road with three consecutive losses.

But on a chilly Wednesday afternoon at home, the Spartans got back on track in commanding fashion, exploding for 15 unanswered runs starting from the bottom of the 4th to rout Williams College 19-4 in a non-conference matchup.

With the win, Castleton improves to 10-17 on the season and reclaims momentum heading into a critical stretch of conference play. The Ephs, who came into the game at 12-8, were stunned by the Spartans' offensive outburst and could not recover after a fast start.

Williams opened the scoring with two runs in the top of the first, capitalizing on early opportunities. Castleton, however, responded immediately. After Tyler Dubreuil reached base,

Jack Boyle got things going with an RBI double to right field.

Mason Meinke followed with a single up the middle to tie the game. The Spartans took

the lead for good after three straight walks—issued to Joe Castellano, Tommie Shaw, and Turner Clews—brought home two more runs to make it 4-2.

The Ephs briefly tied the game with a two-run homer in the second inning, but it would be the last time they crossed the plate. From there, the Spartans shut the door on both sides of the ball.

Castleton reclaimed the lead in the fourth inning when Jackson Cardozo crushed a triple to center field, scoring Dubreuil and Mikey Raby Jr. A sacrifice fly from Justin Strozzyk brought Cardozo home to push the lead to 7-4.

The Spartans added more breathing room in the fifth. With the bases loaded once again, Boyle drew a walk to score a run, and Strozzyk delivered a two-run single to extend the lead to 10-4. Castleton continued to pile on in the seventh with another big inning, scoring four more runs thanks to key at-bats from Meinke, Castellano, and Clews.

By the eighth inning, the Spartans showed no signs of slowing down. Boyle doubled in Dubreuil, and Cardozo reached on an error to bring Boyle home. Three consecutive walks tacked on another

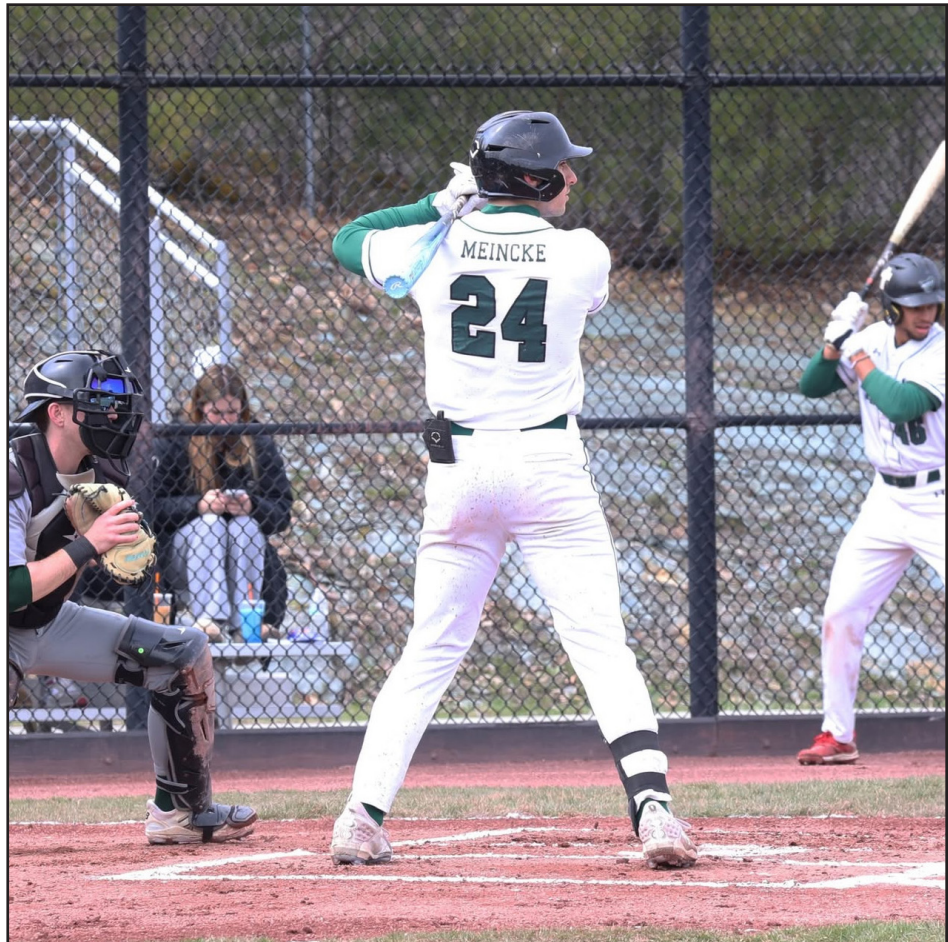
run before Shaw's sac fly, and Clews' fielder's choice capped the scoring at 19.

On the mound, Stephen Coffey went five innings to earn the win, giving up four runs while holding Williams in check after the second inning. Adam Winchell followed with two solid innings, and Ethan Nichols closed it out with a scoreless eighth and ninth, striking out three.

Castellano led the Spartans at the plate, finishing with three hits and three RBIs. Boyle and Clews each added two hits and three RBIs, while Strozzyk chipped in with three RBIs of his own. It was a total team effort, with eight different players driving in runs.

The Spartans headed to Western Connecticut State on April 19 for a pivotal Little East Conference doubleheader, that saw the Spartans split the series with a 13-11 win in game one and a 20-14 loss in game two.

The Spartans next LEC match up is against University of Southern Maine where they will be looking to build off their current success and make a push in the final weeks of the season.



First-year player Mason Meinke is at the plate ready to crank his first career homerun for a grand slam.

Spartans take on Scotland on spring break

Men's soccer team heads overseas to experience culture and play soccer

By Caitlin Connelly
Spartan Contributor

Over Spring break, the VTSU Castleton men's soccer team traveled to Scotland, where they played soccer in a tournament hosted by the Celtic's club team.

The team had spent around four years fundraising for this trip by doing small fundraisers here and there, and a major raffle that was the main source of their income to make it happen.

Throughout the trip, the team traveled with a company called Aspire Sport, which is associated with the Celtic Football Club. There are two main club teams in Scotland—the Celtics and the Rangers. Essentially, these two teams are divided by Protestants and Catholics.

First-year player Nate Lurie explained the significance of these teams amongst the Scottish.

"Whenever we would go out, our tour guide would tell us to not wear any team colors or jerseys to the pub because it's actually a serious thing," he said.

The Spartans played three games in Scotland against international teams, winning two and tying one. Coach John O'Connor reflected on the learning experience this trip provided and how the team can implement skills they learned in the future.

"It was different...it was physical. They do certain things in the Scottish game that they're really good at, like playing long passes or crossing the ball," he said.

Lurie also emphasized the level of physicality these teams possess and talked about what he took away from playing against them.

"The style of play is definitely different. I mean, here we struggle against physical teams that play very direct. But we ended up beating two teams in Scotland," he said.

First-year player Charlie Bell elaborated on the experience of playing soccer in an international country.

"My time spent playing was nothing short of spectacular. I learned a lot from professional academy coaches, and



The team in front of a historical castle in Scotland on top. On the bottom left, four players walking down the streets of downtown Scotland. Bottom right, Charlie Bell is standing with retired professional soccer player Andriy Shevchenko's jersey.

the games were a new level of physicality that I haven't really seen in the U.S.," he said.

Not only was it a learning experience with regards to playing soccer, but the trip also held a historical aspect. Although the teams had a game on Monday and Tuesday, they had Wednesday off to explore Edinburgh. Lurie said it was a surreal experience.

"It was kind of mind-blowing. Most of Edinburgh Castle hadn't been rebuilt, so it was really cool to walk around and see how big it was. It was also really cool to see all the artifacts, like the crown of the Queen. Another really interesting thing was a cannon they had that they set off once every week," he said.

The team also went to Sterling, as well as the William

Wallace Memorial. Along with this, the team also got to tour the city of Glasgow. Glasgow was an exciting place to explore, as the huge city offered many stores, restaurants and street buskers. The team was able to venture around, basking in Scottish culture.

The Spartans also went to a Celtics game, which was an immense deal to them. Bell emphasized that this was his

favorite part of the trip, as he got to watch some of the best soccer players in the world.

Ultimately, the team had a fantastic and successful time going abroad to play soccer.

"It was a once in a lifetime opportunity," Lurie said.

When asked about his favorite part of Scotland, Coach O'Connor reflected with elation.

"I think one of the things

that was really cool was when we were traveling places, we had this really funny Scottish guy, Dave McKay, who would make you sing if you were late to the bus. But my favorite part was the camaraderie. I loved watching the guys. I think really, for me, it was seeing how the guys kind of got together," he said.

Spring offers sports fans so many options

By Hannah Tatro
Castleton Spartan

It's one of the best times of the year to be a sports fan!

The end of April brings tons of action. The Major League Baseball season is well underway, the Stanley Cup playoffs are starting for the NHL, the beginning of the NBA playoffs, and the infamous Masters Tournament.

As a New York Mets fan, I have been pretty happy with the start of the MLB season. At the time of writing this, the Mets sit alone in first place in the National League East, a division they haven't won since

2015.

Of course, it is a 162-game season, and there is still a long way to go, but overall, Mets fans should be happy.

Also worth noting in the N.L. East is the Atlanta Braves, who I would say have been the biggest surprise in the East as they currently sit in last, having started the season with just a 5-13 record through their first 18 games.

The National League West has been arguably the most interesting race to begin the season. Many thought the reigning World Series Champions, the Los Angeles Dodgers, would be the clear-cut favorites for

the division. But, it seems as though they might have their work cut out for them this year, with the San Diego Padres and the San Francisco Giants, who both started the season incredibly hot.

In the American League, the East is looking to be a good race as the season progresses. The New York Yankees currently sit at the top of the division, but both the Toronto Blue Jays and the Boston Red Sox aren't far behind. I think this will shape up to be a close division by the time playoffs roll around in October.

The AL Central and West have also been pretty close,

with no real clear-cut front-runner established yet.

Switching gears, the National Hockey League's Stanley Cup playoffs are finally here!

As a New Jersey Devils fan, I will say I have mixed emotions heading into round one.

I am very excited that they made the playoffs, and I am anxious to see what they can accomplish.

However, I do think it will be a tall task taking on the Carolina Hurricanes, especially without arguably their best player on the ice.

The Devils have been without their star player, Jack

Hughes, since the beginning of March, when he suffered a shoulder injury that required surgery and ended his season early.

The team put up enough of a fight to get into the playoffs, but how they fare against the Hurricanes will be interesting to watch.

I think there are lots of good matchups in the first round that hockey fans should be excited for. I would say, besides the Devils, I am most excited for the Ottawa Senators-Toronto Maple Leafs series and the Dallas Stars-Colorado Avalanche series. I think those should be fun watches.

Another thing to keep an eye on is the NBA playoffs, which are also upon us. I don't watch a ton of basketball, but I do think there will be some fun matchups in the first round.

I will particularly be keeping an eye on the Knicks-Pistons series and the Celtics-Magic series.

I also have to mention Rory McIlroy's Masters win that sealed his first career Grand Slam, making him the first European to accomplish the feat.

These next few weeks should provide lots of fun and entertainment for sports fans of all backgrounds!

Slippery slope of sports betting in college

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

Like most college student athletes, I love sports. There's just something about packed arenas, buzzer-beaters and underdog wins. So, it's no surprise that sports betting has caught fire on college campuses.

Everywhere I look someone's talking odds, parlays, or how if some outrageous baseball player hit a homerun they would have made a grand because the last leg of their parlay.

I'll be honest: I get the appeal because I know exactly what they are talking about. The adrenaline rush in throwing \$5 on your favorite team and watching the game with a little extra on the line, there's nothing like it. Betting adds excitement.

It gives people a reason to care about a random Tuesday night NBA matchup or a mid-major football game they'd otherwise ignore. And for students who know their sports, it can feel like an easy way to turn a quick profit, even if only in small amounts.

There's also a sense of community. Friends bond over wins and losses, fantasy leagues evolve into betting pools, and apps make it all so accessible.

Some students genuinely manage their bets responsibly, setting limits and treating it like entertainment but most treat it like income.

With legal betting now widespread, it's a part of the sports world whether we like it or not. I couldn't tell you how many referral links I got when FanDuel became legal in Vermont.

But here's where it gets tricky, especially as a college athlete.

College athletes don't get to participate at all. Well, aren't supposed to. The NCAA has firm rules: no betting, on any sport that has an NCAA championship event. Even professional sports are off-limits.

And while I understand the reasons, the reality is that athletes live in the same world we do and I don't understand why betting on professional sports is banned by the NCAA. They see the ads, they hear the chatter, and they should be allowed to indulge in it as long as it's not on their sport at the college level.

Sports betting isn't always fun and games. I've seen classmates or teammates get way too deep, fast—chasing losses, hiding how much they've spent, or letting gambling take priority over classes and sleep.

The dopamine hit of a big

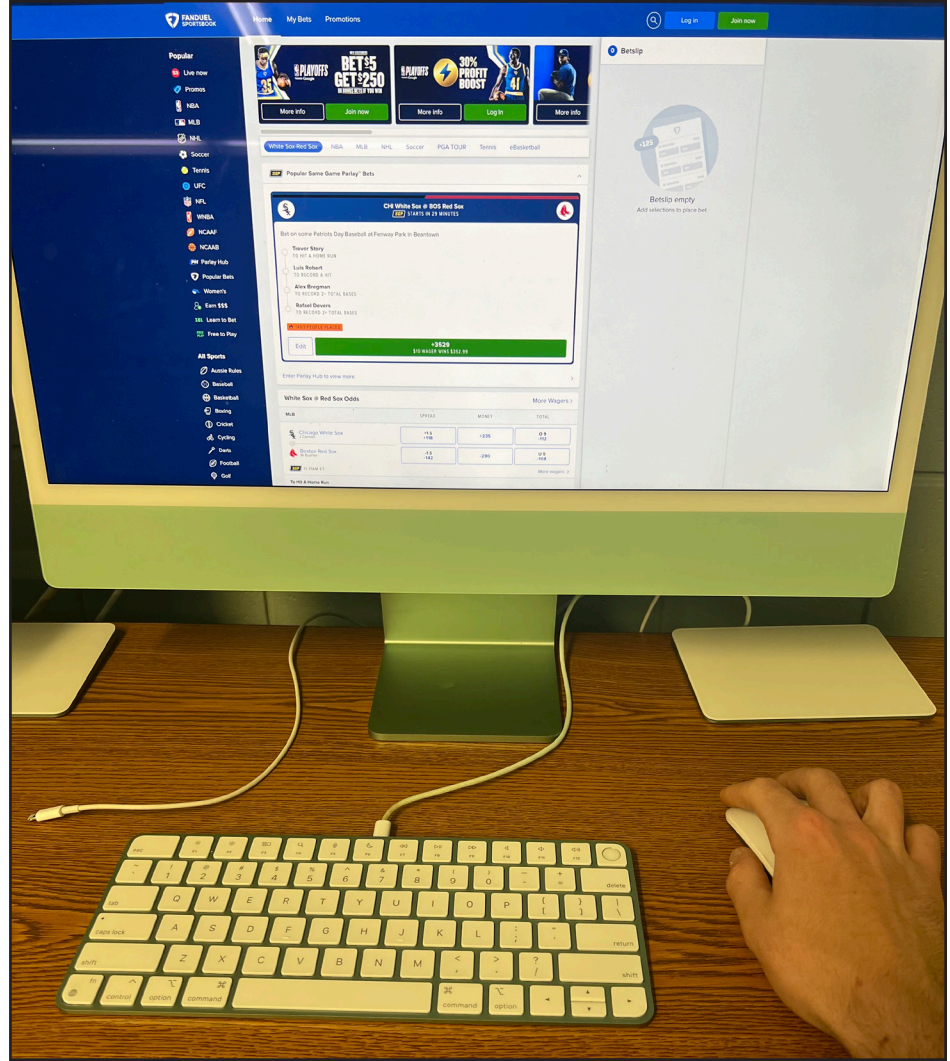
win is addictive, and when the losses pile up, it can feel like you're stuck in a hole you can't dig out of. Been there before. And let's be real, most of us don't have money to burn in college.

That said, sports betting is addictive as hell and hell, I might put a three-leg homerun parlay in now. But like most things, it comes down to balance with sports betting. With the surge of popularity in sports betting, if schools provide proper resources, support, and honest discussions about the risks and rewards, students are much more likely to make informed decisions.

Athletes I also feel like deserve targeted to bet on the professional level, it's not like they are directly involved with those games so why does the NCAA not allow it.

At the end of the day, sports betting isn't inherently good or bad. It's a tool, and if someone can use it to their advantage, I'm all for it because I know I've tried to hit my fair share of parlays during my time as college athlete.

Horse racing sports obviously, wink wink, cause that's one sport NCAA athletes can bet, totally not a four-leg first basket parlay on the NBA playoffs.



STONE STELZL

Spartans finds their mojo in second half

By Wyatt Jackson
Castleton Spartan

At the start of the season, the atmosphere surrounding VTSU Castleton's softball program was shaky. A new head coach, unfamiliar systems, and early losses caused the team to have a slow start. New head coach Eric Kraut understood the transition would be a process, but he said he welcomed it.

"A typical dynamic for a new coach with a new team is understanding the communication styles of each player in order to help them reach their goals for the season," Kraut said. "And that also in turn helps create a more cohesive team and build trust between me and them as well as between the players."

When Kraut took the reins in the offseason, he brought new energy and a vision for the team. Known for his offensive-minded way of coaching, Kraut has also brought an attitude of positivity and belief.

Junior Samera Rideout has recognized Kraut's energy and believes it's been a boost for the team.

"Initially it took time for us to get used to him, but then we all realized Kraut had a different coaching style compared to what we've had before," Rideout said. "He's a very positive coach who thinks outside the box, giving us the ability to play more fearlessly without the thought of making mistakes and helping us focus on winning as a team rather than individually."

But the change wasn't easy, and the Spartans did start the season 3-5 with two opening clunkers against Middlebury College where they managed to be held scoreless in both games.

Miscommunication, errors, and inconsistent play plagued the team through the first few weeks. But despite the setbacks, Kraut remained focused on the process.

"This team is adaptable and has worked hard through all the changes they've had with a new coaching staff. They play

big when they are winning and when they are behind, creating a strong mental game which is a key to success," Kraut said. "The team has all committed to the same goals for the season, which has helped us work together and buy into the values that will get us where we want to be," Kraut added.

A turning point came during a road trip in early April where the Spartans traveled to battle Umass Dartmouth. The Spartans won a tight game 2-1 in the first matchup but showed grit in the second when they pulled out a victory in extra innings to seal the win and the sweep.

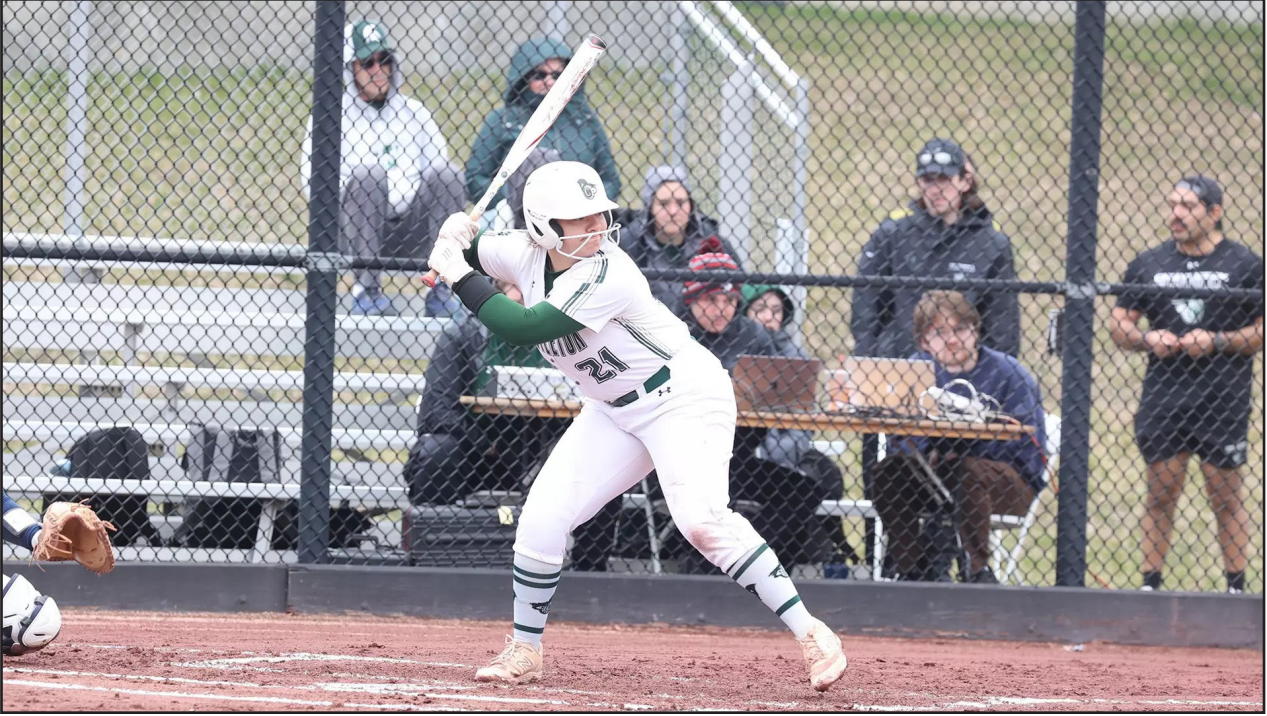
Rideout spoke about how this matchup further solidified the team's trajectory.

"When we swept Umass Dartmouth, it was encouraging because they were ranked higher than us going into that game," Rideout said. "We pulled through the first game and came back in the second game. It showed our grit and how much we believe in ourselves. We learned we can compete with the top teams in the conference after that game when we believe in each other and trust the process."

Junior outfielder Jordan Hill has also seen the shift in the atmosphere as the season has progressed. Hill believes Kraut has been the addition the program has needed because he understands the player's abilities and leans on those abilities.

"My first two years I was not happy because I felt I wasn't getting the looks I deserved, but when Kraut came in, he gave me the chance I deserved and I ran with it," Hill said. "I just believe the new coach believes in our talent and that wasn't always the case in years past. Kraut believes in everybody and wants us to be the best we can be which allows us to play free."

With the second half of the season looming, the Spartans are far from satisfied. This team is eyeing a playoff push as they look to battle for positioning in the conference standings. The schedule won't be easy, but they've already proven they can grow through



CASTLETONSPORTS

On the top junior, Samera Rideout, ready to crank a hit on her way to 100 career hits. On the bottom senior, Trista DeLong, looks to strike out the batter to end the inning.

adversity and come out stronger together.

"I'm excited to see how we finish the regular season playing the way we've been playing, we're all thrilled to see everybody getting their chance

and now the team is closer, allowing us to not dwell on negatives," Hill said. "This coach has boosted my confidence and the team's confidence, giving us that spark we needed."

Kraut believes the Spartans

need to stay grounded in order to build on their momentum as they enter the latter half of their schedule. He said it's important for them to recognize who they are as a team and not let external factors change who

they are.

From early struggles to a midseason resurgence and a current 15-11 record, the Spartans are flying high and the best may still be ahead.

Men's lacrosse tries to dial in for playoffs



CASTLETONSPORTS

Preston Kozlowski cutting through two USM defenders to get in better shooting position.

By Annika Nelson
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton men's lacrosse team has had their fair share of ups and downs this season.

After starting off conference play 2-4, the Spartans currently sit in 6th place.

On Saturday, April 19, the Spartans lost 19-6 at Mass. Maritime, and they look to bounce back quickly as they face off against the UMass Boston Beacons on Tuesday, April 22.

The Beacons are currently 5-1 in conference play, so the game will be a test for the Spartans.

Cam Frankenhoff currently leads the team in points with 34

goals and 10 assists.

First year midfielder Braydon Goddard described his first season as, "Fun, exciting, and hardworking"

Goddard currently has 13 goals and 9 assists in 13 games played.

"During my first year I made so many good friends that I will have for the rest of my life and they have made a huge impact on my college life just by making it easier and knowing that I will have someone to go to whether it is lacrosse related, school related, or mentally related," he said.

Goddard also said that he has taken many things away from his coach. He described head coach Ed Stephenson as a great coach and someone who

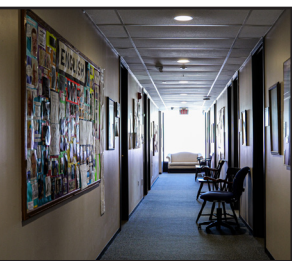
knows the sport as well as anyone.

"This year our team's chemistry is top notch. We are all there for each other on and off the field, and we do mostly everything together as a team. I feel as if I have been part of the team for years with how they all welcomed me in and got to know me," Goddard said.

Goddard looks to keep putting in the hard work that will help him excel in his game.

"My coach also makes this very easy to do by helping me with the team and helping me grow individually," he said.

The Spartans look to get a win at home against UMass Boston on Tuesday.



NEWS

The once busy English Department hallway in Leavenworth is now desolate.

PAGE 3



ART

Student Joe Vyvial's artwork for Casella is sent to Las Vegas Waste Expo.

PAGE 5



SPORTS

Track and field finds success at this year's LEC championships.

PAGE 7



Castleton, Vermont

SCASTLETON SPARTAN

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

Friday, May 9, 2025

New SGA president discusses plans for next year

By Maddie Lindgren
Castleton Spartan

The VTSU Castleton campus just elected a new Student Government Association president who said she is eager to get started.

Aurelia Leerkes, who previously served as secretary of Campus Activities, will take over as SGA president with a clear vision, a great sense of empathy, and a profound commitment to the student body.

Leerkes' rise to SGA president feels like a natural growth.

"I have been running my board for the past year," she said, reflecting on her time at working on campus entertainment. "While I loved being involved with the entertainment we brought to campus, I felt that running for president was the next step for me."

Her involvement in student activities has given her an understanding of Castleton students' needs and values, and she is eager to broaden her impact.

Leerkes' top three goals for the approaching school year are both practical and meaningful. Her first goal is to continue the work of departing President Thomas Kehoe in upgrading dorm conditions.

Under Kehoe's leadership, SGA delegates used their funds to install new water fountains, replace the appliances in the kitchen, and make residence halls better places to live.

"I feel as though this is super important because we want our campus to be a place that people enjoy being at," she said.

Another important concern is helping the individuals who help SGA work efficiently.

"It would be impossible for everything that the SGA Congress does without the board, so making sure that they are supported and feel as confident as they can is very important," Leerkes said.

Leerkes also intends to further improve connections with Castleton President David Bergh, especially about one particular topic.

"I would love to keep graduation for the Castleton Campus here at Castleton for as long as possible, and while I can't guarantee that this is something I can do, I want to work closely with President Bergh on this topic," she said.

Leerkes characterizes her leadership approach based on her empathy. She understands that many SGA members have more duties than just student government. Many have jobs, and many are student-athletes and resident assistants. She believes in being adaptable and supportive.

"I think it is important to be understanding of what other people are going through. I hope that I am a person that students on campus and a part of SGA feel comfortable talking to about any issues they may need support with," Leerkes said.

Leerkes stated that she would like to receive feedback from her new board to start thinking about immediate improvements and begin new projects as soon as possible.

One, in particular, she is excited about is potential partnerships with the alumni board this summer to arrange more events like homecoming, which she sees as an opportunity to strengthen the bond between former and current students.

Burnham calls it a career

Professor Holmes retires after decades of teaching at Castleton

By Emily Ely
Castleton Spartan

After nearly three decades of teaching, mentoring, and storytelling, English professor Burnham Holmes is retiring, leaving behind a legacy that's impossible to summarize with a single title.

"Oh, a man of all the wonders. He is insane. He's one of the most interesting people I've ever met," said junior Nickels Thomas.

That sentiment echoes across generations of students and colleagues who have learned from Holmes, not just about writing or speaking, but about life itself.

Holmes began teaching at Castleton State College in 1996, bringing with him a rich background in publishing and creative writing.

Before the classroom, there was New York City, Toni Morrison, and "The Bluest Eye."

"So, I worked for Toni at Random House," he said. "She wrote on yellow pads with purple felt markers... And I guess I have the distinction of being the first reader of 'The Bluest Eye' because I was photocopying her work."

Holmes had a front-row seat to literary history, including a surreal moment with a civil rights icon.

"I spent like an hour with Jackie Robinson talking about myself," he laughed.

But as time went on, something shifted.

"I got an itch to teach. It was fun. I come from teachers, I guess. My mother and father were both teachers," he said.

That itch turned into a calling, rooted in a philosophy of creative authenticity. Holmes reflected on his time working at School of Visual Arts in New York.

"I liked that SVA had professionals. They didn't have teachers per se. They had professionals. So, who teaches painting? Painters. Who teaches photography? Photographers. Who teaches writing? Writers. And I really liked that philosophy," he said.

What defined Holmes' classroom was his uniquely personal and interactive style.

"His class is very personal. And I think that's one of the best things," Thomas said. "He structures almost all of his classrooms around Effective Speaking. He makes you read in every one of his classes out loud to help you. And I think he's very good at preparing people and showing people that there's very bad things that will happen to you along the way, but there's very good



JOE VYVIAL

Professor Burnham Holmes teaches one of his last classes.

things to look forward to."

For Holmes, teaching was more than imparting knowledge, it was about seeing students grow into their voices.

"I think when you see someone who writes something that they're really proud of... or they give a talk that they feel good about... that's like a highlight. And that's probably one of the reasons why you can teach for a long time," he said.

Alex Chagnon, who took Effective Speaking with Holmes, recalled his lively, engaging demeanor.

"You know, just very bubbly, you know? He's always talking. He's always willing to talk to you. Just a very, very

good teacher and a very good man from the short time I've known him."

Even a single class with Holmes could leave a lasting mark. Thomas recounted a moment from his freshman English Composition course in 2022.

"We did a unit on poetry, which I really liked, and it got me really into writing poetry. And I turned in an assignment, and it was like, 'This is actually so great. Can I please share this with other professors?' And it warmed my heart so much," Thomas said.

Those kinds of moments are what Holmes seemed to live for.

His advice for teachers: "Believe in your students."

"You never know who you're going to touch. Who you're going to make a difference for," he said.

Outside the classroom, Holmes has been a fixture at campus arts events and a frequent contributor to poetry and theater.

"I see that he goes to a lot of the arts events. I work at the box office," said Thomas. "I actually saw him at the chorale concert. And I went to take his ticket, and he thought I wanted to shake his hand, so he shook my hand. And it was really funny. I feel like that's so in character."

Colleague and fellow English professor Flo Keys reflected on her time working with Holmes.

"He's very supportive of the students and that's a wonderful thing," she said.

While she never observed him teach directly, she saw his impact on the community through decades of collaboration.

"It's fun to stop by the office when he's there and just chat ... general things about English, not specific to a particular classroom or style," she said.

See 'Burnham' on page 6.

Uncertainty for international students?

By Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

April 30 marked the 100th day of Donald Trump's second presidential term. Within that timeframe, the Trump administration has erased diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, is trying to end birthright citizenship for people born within the U.S. to parents without permanent legal status, and revoked close to approximately 1,800 student visas (F-1 and J-1).

Many of these visa revocations were linked to pro-Palestinian activism and other forms of protest, according to NPR political analysts.

The freedom of speech.

Our first amendment, ratified in 1791, is the backbone of the United States. And yet, throughout history the right to free speech has been preyed upon. Migrant communities have strayed away from sharing their opinions, let alone fighting for their rights. International students, along with minorities across the country, have been encouraged to avoid any kind of protest.

The intent of this article is to provide some sense of that freedom to students. The individuals interviewed come from six different countries. All with the same intent to graduate, some are working to obtain permanent citizenship, and all express concern over their ability to stay in the country.

Several students have also



ETHAN PROSPERE

Castleton Spartan reporter Aspen Wood interviews an international student who asked to remain anonymous.

applied for political shelter, which is defined as a recognized safeguard that provides refuge for those facing threats in their home country. The individuals interviewed will remain anonymous to protect their safety.

"I'm a very strong-minded person and I haven't ever been hesitant to speak my mind on things," one source said. "For obvious reasons, I feel like I can't."

"I'm tired of feeling silent," another said.

One young woman sat with her hands clenched tightly in her lap, her foot tapping restlessly on the ground. All the interviews started with the same

sense of anticipation and anxiety. Before saying anything, it was obvious everyone shared what one called the "overwhelming sense of uncertainty" at this time.

However, one by one, tense demeanors began to ease, and conversation flowed more freely.

"The country is built on immigrants. I know that there might be people that view me as something that I'm not, but I know who I am and what my intentions are while in the United States," one said.

On his first day in office, Trump signed an executive order intended to deny birthright citizenship to children born in

the United States to parents who are either in the country unlawfully or on a temporary basis, according to the Council of Foreign Relations.

This action was widely criticized by legal scholars as being overtly unconstitutional. The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1868, affirms: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States."

In addition to this measure, the Trump administration also undertook efforts to curtail diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

"Why would I support

someone who doesn't support me," a student responded when asked about their stance on the current president.

"I don't like him that much. He tries to show everyone he's strong, tries to scare everyone. He likes Russia a lot, he loves Putin. And I don't like that."

As the semester comes to a close, most students are anxious about final exams and presentations. In contrast to these stressors, international students worry about their ability to continue their studies in the fall.

"It's constantly on my mind and I really didn't keep up to date or follow politics that closely, but it is getting a little bit scary," one student said. "I wasn't always a very political person, but I feel like I have to be."

International students also explained the difficulty of obtaining work without being a permanent resident. One individual explained that a lot of businesses in Vermont are small-scale, and don't always have the resources to be able to hire someone without residency.

"You could be the best candidate for the position, but as soon as you mention that you are an international student, there's kind of a tension that presents itself," they said.

See 'International' on page 6.

A community seeking change

“Things only change in a community.” This statement came from a protestor marching for the protection of peoples’ rights in Rutland. He marched alongside hundreds of people who came together in protest against our current administration.

This statement resonated with me and really made me realize how important it was that I was there covering this community outcry.

He is correct. Communities coming together all over the world have made a difference in how the administration’s policies have played out.

Although many policies and actions have already caused destruction, there has been some backtracking after President Trump realized he had crossed a line, which, if you like to find the silver lining in a bad situation like I do, may be a positive sign that protestors are making a difference.

The protest started on the corner of West and South Main Streets on May 1 and continued down Center Street and back. As I walked alongside this group of passionate people fighting for a cause, I learned just how much is at stake for so many people if no one holds the administration accountable.

It is not just a fight for LGBTQ and minority rights. It is a fight for the rights of veterans, the elderly living on social security, people with disabilities, minorities, immigrants, and let’s be real, human rights.

We have already witnessed the attack on women’s reproductive rights, but there seems to be no end to what rights will be affected at this point.

The biggest thing that stands out to me about this administration is the blatant hypocrisy. Cancel culture was blamed entirely on liberals by the administration and right-wing news sites even though Trump attempts to silence anyone who disagrees with him.

But what is truly concerning is Trump’s obsession with making us a Christian nation and going back to our industrial roots. This is coming from someone who criticized former president Barack Obama for wanting people to accept every religion.

And while I do think the idea of self-sustainability sounds appealing in many ways, we simply do not have sufficient resources to start cutting off connections with trading countries.

Trump’s actions are eerily like what Kim Jeong Un has done with North Korea. It is a dictatorship under the guise of communism.

These are the things that went through my head as I talked to people about their experiences. It was truly eye-opening.

But one thing I noticed that, as someone who dabbles in art, I can appreciate, was the ability of these individuals to express themselves through art and community. The signs I witnessed were some of the cleverest I had ever seen.

Many of them even included a caricature of Donald Trump himself with references to fascism and authoritarianism.

It was interesting to see how much the gears have shifted against Trump since his election. There were so many cars that went by with horns honking in support of the protest.

However, there are still some who still believe in the administration and its goals, as was proven by a gentleman driving by in a pickup truck shouting “Trump all the way!” out his passenger side window as he leaned over to make sure everyone heard his cry.

Fortunately, most of the group did not hear the cry or did not understand what was said, but it made me think about the mentality of individuals like that man.

My guess is that people still this passionate about Trump do not know what they are truly supporting.

My guess is that these individuals are still living under a blanket of misinformation and lies. But it is all too easy to be swept up by the misinformation that is spread through social media and broadcast news sites.

So how do we educate ourselves and others? Well, as mentioned earlier, community. We connect and communicate, which is what these rallies accomplish, connection and communication. “Things only change in a community,” fellow protestor Jean Yeager proclaimed.

- Amanda Johnson



JOE VYVIAL

Burdening you with my catharsis at 24

For my 24th birthday, my friends and I went to dinner in Saratoga for all-you-can-eat sushi. On the car ride there, I was scrolling through my feed when I came across a post that hit me like a shot to the gut.

A creator I follow - Noah Rollette - was reflecting on turning 24 as well. His post shared five takeaways from 23, all framed by a life that, frankly, looks like the kind I dream of but feel miles away from.

I have a rule about admiring celebrity too deeply. I believe pedestals to be dangerous. Admiration is saved for those who earn it through a connection. For celebrities, that comes through a connection to their median. I admire Noah—not for status, but for substance. His content stands for things I value: community, health, fitness, and conscious entrepreneurship.

But in that moment, it stung. “This guy is the same age as me?”

My friend and I laughed at the absurdity of it – laughed at ourselves a little, too. Comparison is the thief of joy, they say. But at times, it feels impossible not to look at where you stack up on the ladder – especially if you’re an inherently competi-

tive person. It’s your own journey, and you should compete with yourself every day.

That’s the only competitor that matters. But how come I’m not there? Maybe it just isn’t going to happen for me. That’s not where he was at when he was 24.

I’ve found this to be a theme of your early twenties. You’re responsible for creating the life you want to live, and that responsibility can make you feel like you’re somehow behind. It’s an awkward stage where, for the most part, you’re building, growing, and evolving.

At the same time, you see plenty of people your own age living these dream lifestyles, and social media only magnifies the dilemma.

“Your twenties are the best years of your life,” is what everyone tells you. Some kids dream of high school, some dream of their dream job, some dream of wives and kids.

I’ve dreamt of all of those, but I romanticized my twenties. I just had this feeling that this was a magical time in life when the world would open up to you.

There’d be nowhere you couldn’t go, nothing you couldn’t do. True freedom

as an individual. You’d have enough money, and people wouldn’t be able to treat you like a kid anymore.

As I entered my twenties, I began to wake up to the responsibilities of adulthood. God—I gotta retire my parents and save for a house and pay my rent and tuition and taxes and insurance and utilities and credit cards and get a good job and stop taking money from my parents. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

That pressure leads you to look around at your friends who are out of college and on Wall Street making six figures. Ugh. I said I’d never sell my soul. But I want money. How do I make the goddamn money I want and still enjoy my career and have freedom to experience life and its many adventures? Is that just another pipe dream? Long shot?

There’s a certain guilt you carry when you grow up. You realize what your existence has cost others. Perhaps it’s just the empathetic who feel this – and not the entitled. Still, I don’t believe this guilt is healthy. For me, a fair amount of this time has been spent with a pit in my stomach. I was waiting for the other shoe to drop. I expected

some large, life-altering, catastrophic event.

That existential dread – and perhaps emptiness – made me feel like the life I hoped for would get derailed.

But the other shoe never dropped.

Every year around my birthday, I have my own little existential crisis, and this year, as I waited for it to kick in, I instead woke up and knew: this was something I could no longer live with. Would any of these people whose work and lives I admire cower to fear of unknown? Courage is not the absence of fear, it is persistence despite it.

Nothing irreparable has happened. We’ve all gotten through everything that has taken us to this point. It has all been cause and effect, the consequences of our own actions.

The consequences of inaction have been more detrimental. From where I stand now, my best piece of advice is: take a deep breath, it is all going to work out. And be busy living.

- Jackson Edwards

Castleton helped challenge and change me to make it out

When I first came to what was then Castleton University, I had no idea just how much I would change. Back then, I was a psychology major and a proud member of the wrestling team. That was my identity, until it wasn’t.

I ended up getting kicked off the team. To this day, my parents still don’t know the truth. I told them I quit because I was too ashamed to admit I got removed. That moment almost broke me. I was one step

away from dropping out completely.

But I didn’t. Not because I had some grand plan but because I didn’t want to bring any more shame to my family. If I was going to stick with college, I needed to do it on my terms. So, I started from scratch. I searched for something that inspired me.

I’ve always had a passion for YouTube, storytelling, and visual media. That passion led me to switch my major to Me-

dia and Communication with a focus in Video and Film Production, and I even picked up a minor in Cannabis Studies something that ended up fitting me better than I ever expected.

But my story doesn’t just start at Castleton. I come from a place where people don’t make it out. A neighborhood full of crime, poverty, and distractions designed to keep you from becoming your best self. A lot of people from where I’m from don’t get the chance to re-

write their story.

Most didn’t even think I’d graduate high school. There were times I didn’t either. But now I’m standing on the edge of graduating college and that’s something no one can take from me.

Funny enough, I used to hate writing. Now, I’m a journalist for our school paper. That transformation wouldn’t have happened without one professor: Dave Blow.

He saw potential in me

before I saw it in myself. He pushed me, challenged me, and helped me find a voice I never thought I had. Because of him, I found purpose again and started trying.

VTSU Castleton became more than just a college for me, it became the place where I found myself. Where I stopped running from who I was and started building who I wanted to become. Through all the ups and downs, I’ve learned that your beginning doesn’t define

your end.

This place gave me the space to grow, to heal, and to find my mission: to help make the world a happier, healthier, and higher place.

Thank you, Castleton. You helped me change and carve my path.

-Isiah Hughes

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CASTLETON
SPARTAN

Castleton, Vermont

STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF VTSU CASTLETON

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*The Spartan is the official student newspaper of VTSU Castleton. It functions to inform, educate and entertain readers accurately and responsibly. The University, its administration, faculty, student body and staff are not responsible for the content..

‘Thanks for everything Spartan, I’ll miss you’

I was never a writer. I dreaded my English classes in high school. I didn’t think I was good at it, I thought it was boring, and I certainly didn’t understand what AP Style meant.

If you had told me as a freshman that I’d one day be writing a farewell piece for my university’s newspaper, I would have laughed and run the other way.

To me, writing was simply words on a piece of paper that you completed for a grade and then never looked at again.

But then, of course, I met professor David Blow.

He’s a man who not only has the talent for storytelling, but also manages to choose the very best strawberries for our Sunday morning page designs. I’ll never get over them.

He got me into journalism when I didn’t realize I

needed it. The first class I took with him was only to fulfill a requirement, but instead, it changed the direction of my college experience. He showed me that writing can be more than just words on paper.

I first learned about The Castleton Spartan late in my freshman year. At the time, I didn’t see myself as a journalist. When Dave mentioned it to me, I didn’t take it very seriously. I figured I’d maybe write a story or two and keep to the background. But that changed quickly when Dave saw a writing voice in me.

By my sophomore and junior years, I had become invested. I began taking on additional responsibilities, such as editing, page design, and page placement, as well as asking more questions. I gradually realized that this wasn’t simply

a campus club or something for my resume, but much more. This paper, and the people in it, were some of the most significant parts of my college experience. I started to find excitement in the stories we would put out and all the deadlines.

I’ve covered stories that took me to parts of campus I wouldn’t have seen otherwise. While doing this, I realized that journalism is more than just reporting facts, it’s about getting the privilege to tell other people’s stories.

I even got the chance, twice, to head to New York City for the College Media Association conference. The Spartan placed Best College Newspaper for Division III two years in a row, which made up for all the sleep deprivation in NYC.

To Joe, Stone, Em, Gabby, Jess, Pearl — thank you. It’s

hard to put into words how thankful I am to have gotten to be a part of such a wonderful team, which is ironic because putting things into words is my job.

The Spartan did more than simply improve my writing skills. It helped me become a better person. More confident, more interested, and with a much greater understanding of storytelling.

As I write this and sign off one last time, I do so with a lot of gratitude. I’m thankful for every story I got to tell and every person I got to work alongside.

Thanks for everything, Spartan. I’ll miss you.

- Maddie Lindgren
Spartan Managing Editor

I’m graduating in Castleton University green

Stepping through the doors of Leavenworth for one of the last times, I reflect on my time at Castleton.

We’re called Vermont State University now but I’m talking about Castleton University. Where the school colors were green and white.

A deep, rich green; Castleton green.

The same color as the dress I’ll be wearing when I walk the stage at graduation.

The same color I envisioned when I was accepted as a student, four years ago.

Castleton University shaped me. The first time I wielded my own voice happened in these halls, on this campus.

When I joined *The Spartan*, I wrote fluff pieces. However, as I’ve gone back and read those pieces, it wasn’t fluff. It was social commentary.

I wrote provocative pieces on society and how we fit into it.

I had an excuse to skip my 10 a.m. one time, but that was actually to exercise my right to protest, when the school tried closing down our library.

I cared deeply about my school and what I was leaving behind after I graduated.

I had professors like Flo Keyes and Denny Shramek who lit up a classroom with their personality. They taught me how to understand.

An understanding that goes far beyond literature and the walls of room 102.

I had professors like Dave Blow and Sam Davis-Boyd who introduced me to a world of journalism and storytelling.

I am beyond grateful for Castleton University and what

it has given me in these last years.

I’m even grateful for VTSU for providing me with reasons to fight for my education, my professors, and the heart of this university.

As I bid my farewell to my dearest school, thank you to my professors, my friends, and the place that shaped me.

- Jess Emery
Spartan Online editor

Housing options shift for fall semester

Gabby Blanchard
Castleton Spartan

Two dormitories at VTSU Castleton won't be living options next semester, and students are wondering why. "My first thoughts of Haskell and Adams not being available next semester were, how are all the students going to have living space, and that application rates were going to plummet," VTSU student Sarah-beth Martinez said. But Director of Residence Life and Housing Operations Michael Robilotto said there is no need to worry about this. Robilotto said this year the Castleton campus has 100 students graduating who are currently living on campus, which opens those spots for the incoming freshmen and he

hopes the numbers will even back out. However, if an influx of students comes in the fall, then the buildings can open back up based on need, he said. "We looked at what buildings students want to live in based on occupancy rates," Robilotto said. "Students want singles and suites, so we didn't want to take off buildings that were mainly single rooms." However, some students see Haskell and Adams as a top pick. Martinez explains how if she wasn't fortunate to have been able to live in Castleton Hall next semester, Haskell and Adams would have been her second and third choice, which are now unavailable. Robilotto said the VTSU Master Plan had always accounted for each campus taking a building or two offline

for renovations and repairs or simply just rest, then to rotate that process throughout the other buildings on the campus. "Each campus has at least one building offline for the fall," he said. "The Randolph campus has a building that has been closed for two to three years and are just now moving forward with renovations to then put another offline." Castleton Hall's renovations are starting soon, as the closing process of the building has already begun to happen with some students having been moved throughout the year. The plan is for the building to be completely empty after this year's upcoming commencement so it can open back up for next semester. Robilotto stressed that the buildings are not permanently closing but are just offline to

students for room selection next semester. He explains how Castleton Hall was always going to be back under construction to fully finish it, with the bathrooms and common spaces first to be tackled. Robilotto said decisions are being made with students in mind. He wants them to feel fulfilled in their living space with an ease to making new connections. "I would want first-year students living in buildings where they feel a lot is going on within the campus community," he said. Even though only some of the buildings are being taken down and assessed for repairs, at some point he said he'd like to touch every building to do some renovations and repairs. "The idea is to start now because the longer we wait,



EMILY ELY

Haskell Hall is one of two dorms that will be temporarily closed during the 2025-2026 school year. the more the prices of products will go up," Robilotto said. "Overall, our main goal is that we want students living in places that make them feel comfortable and happy."

The bare hall of Leavenworth

By Jess Emery
Castleton Spartan

Walking through the halls of the English department four years ago was filled with excitement. Students were passionate about what they were learning from various skilled and knowledgeable professors. It used to be even more vibrant years before that. A decade or more ago, the department was filled with energy. There were six to eight full-time faculty and 70 to 80 English majors bustling around the department, office doors stayed open later into the evening, students were excited to learn, and professors were excited to teach. Cassie Papandrea, a part-time English professor and Castleton alum, reflected back on her time as a student at Castleton. "The English majors would sit on the couches in Leavenworth and discuss the books we were reading for our classes or what writing pieces we were working on. We had the opportunity to take a variety of literature, writing, and pedagogy-based courses because there were so many members of the department. This allowed for our curiosity and our passions for these topics to grow," she said. There were even enough majors and faculty for the department to sustain three concentrations: British Literature, Children's Literature and American Literature. One of the full-time professors, Drennan Spitzer, taught Children's literature, which was a big hit for education students. "People were busting down the doors to get into those classes and Drennan was teaching classes in Children's Literature that were special topics and so there was a lot more variety, a lot more excitement about that," current department Chair Andrew Alexander said.



ETHAN PROSPERE

The once bustling English Department hallway in Leavenworth now has become desolate.

English professor Flo Keyes also reflected on a time when the department was much livelier. She used to sit in her office until 9 p.m. grading work and other faculty would stay until 7 p.m. doing work as well. "There was a robust evening program with part-time faculty teaching philosophy, which was actually part of the English department, and writing and speech for largely non-trads [non-traditional students] at night and while there's still some of that, people teach and go home," Keyes said. "They [professors] don't want to be here because the atmosphere is not positive." The atmosphere of the English department has changed

quite a bit since those days. This semester, with Chris Boettcher on sabbatical, there are 1½ full-time professors in the English department. "Now of course, since we merger, which was forced on us and not something we wanted, there are more people at Lyndon and Johnson. So, we might have seven total at all three schools," Keyes said. There's not enough faculty for a sustainable program. With so few full-time professors, many of the part-time professors have to take on higher-level courses. "There is an expectation on the part of students when they come to a college that the majority of their major courses

will be taught by full-time faculty," Keyes said. "And that is not to disparage the qualifications of my peers because they are excellent teachers with great qualifications. It's just that to call yourself a university, you ought to be able to offer the major courses and have full-time faculty teach them." During the merger, both students and faculty were facing a chaotic time. "The merger was a little chaotic, and I know that is the case in probably every department. There was a lack of communication and uncertainty about course requirements, professor positions, and the future direction of the department," says senior Caroline Gould, an edu-

cation major with a concentration in English. "I feel deeply for those professors who have dedicated countless years to this school who, truthfully, got the short end of the stick to put it simply. If you take a step back and put things into perspective, there are a few that left because of the dysfunction of the merger," she continued. English students faced great uncertainty during the merger. Since most of their favorite professors would no longer be teachers at VTSU Castleton, they didn't know the hands their educations lay in. "During the time of the merger, my position as an English major felt threatened,"

started senior and English major Rosie Phalen. "The first thing the administration attempted to cut was the library. Not only does this have a negative impact on English majors, but essentially all majors because it is a resource to all of us. Pretty soon after that, many of the professors were essentially being forced out," she continued. "I felt like such central parts of the humanities departments were being stolen from us as paying students, and further being taken from our community," she said. Students aren't the only ones in the English department who might feel unsure of their place at VTSU Castleton. During the time of the buyout, a couple of years ago, there were 14 full-time English faculty in the VTSU system and the maximum number that would have been accepted for the buyouts were nine. Keyes explained that although some were already planning on retiring, it seemed to have sped up the process for others. That did not used to be the case. "There was this sense that you would probably be here unless you chose to go somewhere else," Keyes said. A couple great losses for the English department were Denny Shramek and Tersh Palmer. Students took their absence to heart as they continue their studies at VTSU Castleton. "Losing professors like Tersh and Denny, and soon Flo, had a big impact. They were not just knowledgeable, but deeply passionate and invested in their students and their position as English professors," Gould said. "It sometimes feels like we lost part of the heart of the department, and in my opinion, we did." Losing these professors also led to a decreased variety in the classes. One

See 'English' on page 6

Select Board addresses trail plans, alcohol rules, zoning

By Hannah Tatro
Spartan Contributor

One local man's gift could become a huge gain for the town's recreation scene. At a recent Select Board meeting, there was discussion of Ed Davis, a Castleton landowner, looking to donate acreage to the town that could be used to create trailheads on Birdseye Mountain. If the land were to be donated, it would become town-maintained and allow for an access point to hiking trails on the mountain, as well as a designated place for parking, because no motor vehicles or ATVs will be permitted on the trails. The board was very interested in this idea and appeared eager to learn more about the proposal. "I like the idea of having a place to park and access to Birdseye. It would be huge," said Chairman Richard Combs. At a prior meeting, when the donation was first proposed to the board, board member Mark Brown seemed elated to learn of the opportunities that could come of the land. "I'm so over the top about this that I could gush about it," said Brown, who was not present at the April 14 meeting. While the board was very much in favor of exploring the opportunity, there was one concern from member Rob



COURTESY TOWN OF CASTLETON.

On April 14, Select Board members gathered for a bi-monthly meeting.

Steele. What would happen if the remainder of Davis's land in the area, which is up for sale, was sold? The board is asking Town Attorney Merrill Bent to look into the legality issue before moving forward. The board took no immediate action, as this was more of an update on where things currently stand. Also during this meeting, a discussion continued about permitting alcohol use in town

facilities and on town property, in reference to the Friends of Castleton Parks and Recreation's Cash Bash fundraiser set to take place on June 7. The board was approached at a previous meeting by Mary McIntyre, the vice president of Friends of Castleton Parks and Recreation, with regards to the authorization for the fundraising event to sell catered beer and wine to their ticket buyers. One board member in particular expressed concern

about allowing the serving of alcohol in the town facility. "I just don't know why you think you have to have alcohol, that I have a problem with," said Vice Chairman Robert Spaulding at a previous meeting where no decisive action was taken on the matter. At the most recent meeting, McIntyre approached the board seeking an update, to which she was told the item was not on the agenda to be discussed that night and to return for the

next meeting. McIntyre then left the meeting. Later on, Combs realized the item was on the agenda and explained that he would apologize to McIntyre for his mistake. The board voted to approve the use of alcohol on a one-time basis for this event. The motion passed with three votes in favor and one against, which was Spaulding. In a follow-up interview, McIntyre said she felt bad for missing the vote, but she assumed they weren't doing anything with it that night. "But I'm elated that they're using us as a trial," she said. "And I'll take great responsibility in this being the first one." She said that they have sold many of the available tickets, but that she expects to sell more now that people realize they can have a glass of wine or beer during the event. "It'll be a jovial, nice event," she said. In other business: -The board discussed an issue with ponding stormwater at the Green Mountain Church of Christ, which church officials say has worsened since the town put in new sidewalks. The board says that the sidewalks are not the cause of the problem, and that this has been an issue long before the sidewalks were put in. Chairman

Richard Combs discussed the possibility of the town paying a certain amount of money to help get it fixed, but they don't feel the town is responsible. No further action was taken on the matter. -The board is looking to appoint two members to the Recreation Department: Hubbardtown resident Jennifer Morrison-Taylor and Castleton resident Eric Pulver. The board took no further action at this meeting, as only Morrison-Taylor was present. The board deemed that Pulver needed to be appointed at the same time to maintain the department's Castleton majority. -Board members approved a motion for the removal of weeds at Crystal Beach that will take place after the first of June. -The board was approached by Castleton resident Tim Gilbert, who expressed his concerns about a potential zoning regulation that could result in residents needing to move their fences to be three feet from the property line. The board took no action, stating that the decision was not yet finalized. -Board members discussed the potential sale of three 10-acre parcels of land in Crystal Heights, but they first want to investigate what the land is worth both with and without sewer connection. No further action was taken by the board.

Stewards of the earth host a plant sale



MARY DROEGE

VTSU President David Bergh holds his newly purchased plant with Aspen Wood, Nik Villalobos and Cora Godbout after visting the plant sale on April 22.

By Aspen Wood
Castleton Spartan

Driving through Vermont this past week, it was easy to see how outdoor recreation among the community has

significantly increased. The warmer weather has also encouraged the appearance of daffodils and crocuses, students longboarding to class, and an increase in foot traffic along the hiking trails of the Castleton campus.

The shift to spring and summer is

more than a season change for Vermont farmers and gardeners; this is the start of the growing season.

The kickoff of the growing season is vital to a successful harvest for growers, making it one of the busiest times of the year. Several VTSU

Castleton students take advantage of the university's greenhouse as a study space.

However, the ability to do so has proven difficult recently, as the tables are filled with new sprouts. Local farms and gardens are also in full swing, including Blume Vermont, a small-scale flower farm in Clarendon.

MaryJo Callaghan, proprietor of Blume, constantly reinforces her love and importance of working with the earth.

"As a life-long gardener and steward of the earth, I was raised to cultivate and treasure the gifts of gardening, farming, and Mother Nature," Callaghan said.

The VTSU Castleton Greenhouse and Garden Club hopes to collaborate with Blume at some point in the fall. Being able to understand how to use and maintain nutrients within the soil cannot be done without a strong understanding of sustainable practices and Blume promotes the usage of no-till beds, meaning disturbing the soil is minimized during planting and harvesting.

The health benefits of working outside go beyond being active and getting outside; there are studies present in the scientific community supporting the claim that working with the earth and soil can dramatically impact an individual's mental health.

"Plants undoubtedly make people happy, myself included," said Professor Mary Droege.

Events are hosted by the VTSU Castleton Sustainability Team for the entirety of Earth Week, to promote environmentally friendly practices.

In collaboration with the events, the Greenhouse and Garden Club hosted an open house and plant sale on April 22.

VTSU President, David Bergh, was present on campus and made an appearance at the event, leaving with a new houseplant in support of his students.

"I'm pleased with the student efforts around campus," Bergh said. "The efforts are more important than ever, and in reality, every day is Earth Day."

The club sold a variety of houseplants, along with homemade salves and soaps. Herbs grown in the garden were used to make both products. Refreshments were complimentary, including a lemon cake made by Droege. The Meyer lemons used in the cake were grown in the greenhouse. Students and faculty alike left the event with smiles on their faces and plants in-hand.

"I was pleasantly surprised with the turnout," Cora Godbout, current Greenhouse and Garden Club President said. "I'm always excited when people show interest in the greenhouse. It's a great space."

The Greenhouse and Garden club offers students the opportunity to learn how to effectively work with plants and learn more about our relationship with the natural world.

"There's increasing importance that we treat every day as Earth Day," Droege said. "Living your life in the awareness that we live simultaneously with our resources is vital."

The next plant sale will be held at the greenhouse on May 20 and 21. All are welcome.

COM Department gets fresh new sign

By Caitlin Connolly
Castleton Spartan

On Friday, March 2, the Communications Department installed a mural in Leavenworth Hall recognizing the many special contributions that make up their department.

Before the mural, the wall in the computer lab of Leavenworth was empty.

Communication and graphic design students who comprise the Content Lab club, along with co- advisor Sam Davis-Boyd and other Communications faculty, wanted to find a way to create something special that would define the program.

"We spent a lot of time trying to figure out what we could do with that space. How do we define the Communications program? We were trying to figure out how to brand a space. After talking with faculty and the Communications program and some students, they landed on the design that is the finished product. And I think everyone is really, really happy with it," Boyd said.

She elaborated that the depictions in the mural, like The Castleton Spartan newspaper, a microphone and film tools, illustrate what the department offers.

Before coming up with the final design, Content Lab Co-



RUBEN SOMDA

A new mural, created by the Castleton Content Lab club, was installed by Tuttle Printing in the basement of Leavenworth Hall displaying multiple aspects the Communications Department has to offer.

President Ruben Somda said they had a few ideas that they were originally considering.

"We had a few designs that we did initially like. There was one that was kind of leaning more towards a postcard design. There were also a few [that were] diner-vibish. We were able to land out a more simplified design that kind of

worked in the VTSU colors," he said.

The overall goal was for the Content Lab to leave something positive for the department for everyone to see.

"This is something tangible, where we can come back and know this is something we made in 2025. This is kind of us leaving our mark on our pro-

gram, and that's the tangible evidence of it," he said.

Content Lab member Colby Tucker led the art side of the project with help from Ashleah Adams.

Tucker said he was thrilled with how it turned out and expressed what this project meant to him.

"The process was fun and

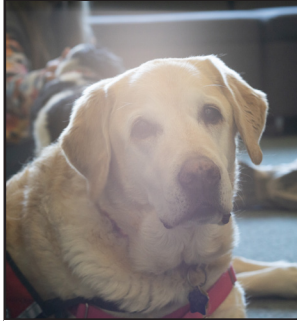
collaborative. We spent time making sure the design really fit the space and represented the energy of the COM Lab. I think it shows that the graphic design students deserve more recognition and access to the resources here at Castleton. It feels good knowing we left something behind that'll hopefully inspire others," he said.

Adams said the project was a lot of fun, but there was a bit of pressure because it is permanent.

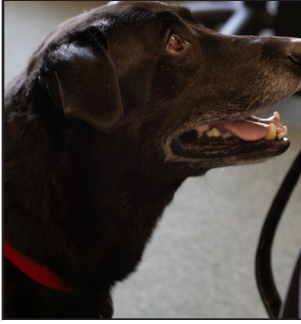
"We all agreed that it needed to show us moving forward together the different programs in the Communication department living as one. Unity was at the forefront of our brains when designed this," she said

Meet the Thursday therapy dogs

PHOTOS BY ETHAN PROSPERE



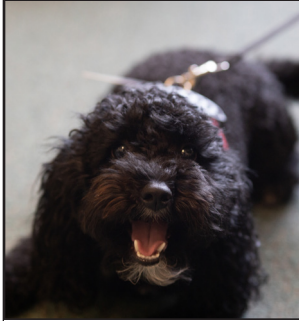
Riley



Olive



Hoss



Finn



Morgan



Murphy

Tattoo of the week: An ink marathon

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

Some people relax during break. Others, like VTSU Castleton student Isabella Luna, turn it into a full-blown tattoo adventure.

Over the course of one whirlwind weekend, Luna got not one, not two, but four tattoos, each with its own story and meaning.

The ink marathon began on Thursday, April 10, with a visit to an old tattoo artist.

"I started with a back tattoo from my old artist," she said.

And things really got wild just two days later at the Saratoga Tattoo Expo on April 12.

"So, I pull up and it was so

overstimulating," Luna shared. "I just heard the sound of all the buzzing and the sounds of the disinfectant. There was a lot going on."

Held in a large venue buzzing with creativity, the expo had no appointments, just a stampede of artists and tattoo enthusiasts ready to make art on the spot.

"It wasn't just tattoo artists. There were crowds of people, all trying to get tattoos," she said.

But despite the chaos, Luna was impressed by how spotless everything was.

"It was a very clean and cleanly place," she said.

At the expo, she added three more tattoos to her growing collection: a rib tattoo of a

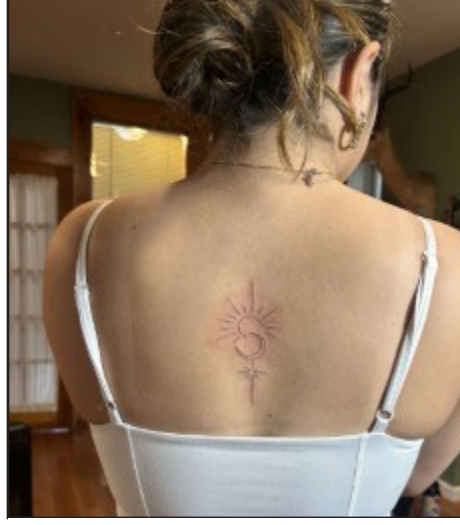
cross, symbolizing her faith, a butterfly on the back of her arm to honor her late grandmother, and the word "adorn," a simple but powerful word that resonates deeply with her.

"I just really like the word adorn. It means to make more beautiful, and I try to see the world through that lens now," Luna explained.

Even more impressive? She scored all four tattoos including tip for just \$350.

For Luna, the experience wasn't just about the tattoos it was about expression, being spontaneous, and carrying a bit more beauty with her wherever she goes.

After all, what better way to adorn life than with a little ink?



COURTESY ISABELLA LUNA

Isabella Luna displays her fresh back tattoo and a butterfly on her arm honoring her late grandmother that she got two days apart.

Castleton Confidant

Got drama? Dilemmas? Deep, dark secrets?
The Castleton Confidant is your anonymous advice guru, run by an Editor at The Spartan. Whether you need help, a fresh perspective, or just someone to vent to scan the QR code and spill it all. We're listening.

Dear Castleton Confidant,

How do I know if this relationship is still real? I'm a senior and my boyfriend and I have been doing long-distance since we started college, he's 900 miles away, and it feels like I'm dating a memory at this point. Our FaceTimes are getting shorter, his replies are slower, and when I go out with friends, I feel this weird guilt like I'm doing something wrong just by living my life. I'm scared to break up because we've been together for years, but I don't even know who he is anymore. Am I holding on to love or just scared to be alone?

— Emotionally Maxed Out

Dear Emotionally Maxed Out,

I hate to hear that you're feeling like this. I know personally how challenging long distance can be.

I want you to re-read your message to me. You mention feeling guilty for living your life, feeling like you're "dating a memory," your communication has lessened, and you don't even recognize him anymore. If your best friend told you they were feeling like this in their relationship, how would you react?

I know how harsh this reality is and I know how hard it is to put yourself first, after putting someone else first for years. BUT! When you choose yourself, your life will improve in a million different ways. You're a senior this year, which is just a shorter way to say that your world is getting shaken around and turned upside down. You and the world around you are constantly changing so it is natural to outgrow certain individuals and situations in your life that no longer serve you.

Breakups suck, and that's the reality. But it gets better (I know this is the most annoying thing to hear)! Think to yourself, what's worse; feeling stuck and "emotionally maxed out" in your relationship or facing the heartbreak head on and then rediscovering yourself and your life outside of college.

Phew. Even just writing that, a weight feels lifted off my shoulders, imagine how you'll feel.

This is your life and you shouldn't feel weighed down by a relationship that no longer shows you.

I also want to mention—and I'm sorry if this upsets you; but if you're feeling this way, I would put money on the fact he is feeling the same. It is obvious when a person isn't happy. When someone so close to you feels upset and unsatisfied, it's natural to feel the same.

Relationships are rocky and sometimes you work through them and sometimes it's time to put it to an end.

I know that you know what to do.

I wish you the best, Emotionally Maxed Out. And I wish a bottle of wine and a pint of Ben and Jerrys shows up at your doorstep.

—The Castleton Confidant

Rain or shine, her style is on point

By Carly Centenno
Castleton Spartan

You may have seen her, strutting around in her fabulous outfits, warm or cold, rain or shine.

VTSU Castleton senior Jess Emery never fails to eat us all up with her fashion game. Emery, an English major and communications minor, puts together some of the most eye-catching fits you will ever see.

"I try not to think too hard about a specific style or aesthetic because I find that to be limiting, but if I had to define it, I'd say I lean towards an eclectic style that ranges from bohemian to gothic to some streetwear," she said. "I feel really inspired by those who mix several types of styles and don't stick to the boxes to curate a whole new look."

From her shoes to her jewels, there's nothing that she can't rock. Her style is very versatile and she obviously has different ones for different seasons, because who wouldn't.

"My favorite pieces to wear at the moment are brown boots that my mom found at Goodwill with long or short skirts," Emery said. "I just found this leather bag with striped animal prints on it that I adore for a statement piece. Very western grunge, which I would like to integrate into my summer fashion. I've been loving anything lace mixed with knitted material and denim. I feel so inspired by Madison Wild and the way she goes about putting her outfits together."

But Emery doesn't just focus her clothes; her makeup pops as well. She always makes sure that her makeup complements, and helps spark up her outfits even more.

"There's nothing specifically interesting about my outfits themselves, but I always deck myself out in jewelry and sparkly makeup, which is really fun," she said.

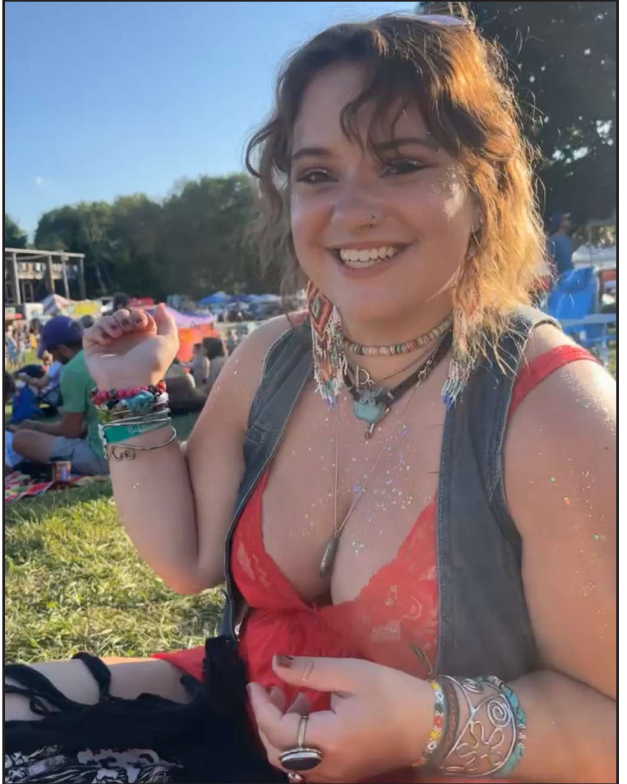
Her favorite outfit ever is one she wore at this music festival called Grassroots.

"Last summer, I wore a red vintage Victoria's Secret night-

gown as a dress with a denim vest over it. This woman probably in her 70s came up to me and said I looked fucking fabulous and went on to say I would fit in perfectly at Burning Man and that she recognized my lingerie a mile away. So, I love that outfit for the story that came with it," Emery said with a giggle.

Emery will forever leave a lasting imprint on the Castleton campus as one of the most iconic students. Her biggest advice for others wanting to try new things is to remember it's ok to not always serve the best look and it takes a lot of trial and error to find the right style for you.

"Sometimes you'll have to look a little weird before you find what works for you. It can be hard not to get wrapped up in what other people deem cool or trendy, but try different styles. You don't have to stick to just one," Emery said.



JESS EMERY

Jess Emery poses for a picture wearing her favorite outfit at Grassroots Music Festival last summer.

Look out Vegas!

Student's Casella artwork to be featured in Las Vegas Waste Expo

By Joe Vyvial
Castleton Spartan

Mid-October of last year, I started my Graphic Design internship with Casella Waste, an opportunity that fell from the sky for me. Ever since, I've been working on numerous projects regarding mostly print and digital graphics. I've done print ads, posters, graphics for social media and Casella's newsletters, animations and signage.

Part of the reason I was offered this internship, at least from what I've been told, was my artistic abilities that I've shown in my portfolio. Because the time I had left with Casella in the fall semester was so short, we weren't really able to utilize my artistic skills. Luckily, my internship got extended, so I had lot more time to show what I can do.

Earlier this year, I was told about this Waste Expo thing happening in Las Vegas in early May, and that Casella would like to participate as part of their 50th anniversary celebrations. The Waste Expo is North America's largest event dedicated to the solid waste, recycling, organics and sustainability industries.

Among its many great features, more than 500 companies exhibit their products and services. It also features educational sessions and practices and opportunities to connect with industry leaders.

Waste Expo also offers the unique Carts on Display competition, where participants creatively transform standard waste carts into works of art.

That's where my part comes in.

I was asked if I'd be interested in doing such thing. They thought that it'd be really cool if I could paint it. It was not hard decision for me at all. Having my work displayed in Las Vegas? You can't say no to that.

The idea was to somehow represent 50 years of the company. We came up with a design, I made some sketches and sent it for approval. It didn't get



Joe Vyvial poses with his finished product of the Casella Waste Expo Entry, left. Lid of the Casella Waste bin highlighting Vyvial's art of the Casella owners, top right. Progress check on day three of Vyvial's painting process, bottom right.

approved at first, so we had to change the concept a little bit and the whole process just ended up taking a lot longer than expected. I originally thought I would have at least three weeks to do it, but I ended up having only eight days.

At that point I was told that I don't have to do it, that it was up to me to decide whether I'm able to make it or no. I was seriously considering not doing it. But I couldn't just give up without even trying.

So, for the next seven days, I spent pretty much 15 hours a day in this temporary studio in the Wooldridge House that professor Oliver Schemm was kind enough to set up for me.

The time pressure was stressing me out at first, but once I saw the progress I was making, it disappeared. I ended up enjoying it a lot. It's been almost a year since I painted or crafted anything like that, and it was a nice change from staring at the computer screen for



JOE VYVIAL

the past few months.

The final design consists of three parts. The bottom half of the cart has subtle scribbles of recyclable items and company taglines. The upper half represents the evolution of Casella over the past 50 years, using simple icons like the first truck or the first material recovery facility. The third part is the lid that has two portraits, both of the founders John and Doug Casella, one of them from 50 years ago and one from today.

It was a challenge, but I got it done. I'd like to thank the Casella's marketing team for giving me this opportunity and for all the help, and to professors Phil Whitman, Oliver Schemm and Bill DeForest for advising me throughout the process. The cart is now in Vegas and I'm excited to see how it'll do.

I'll be posting videos and more info about the whole process on my Instagram page @ pepino.arts.cz

Is it a shopping problem, or is it endless options?



CARLY CENTENNO

Carly Centenno wears one of her favorite outfits of the semester, left. Centenno and her boyfriend, Walter Lundstrom, pose for a daily outfit of the day mirror picture, right.

Carly Centenno
Castleton Spartan

Anyone who knows me knows I have a severe shopping problem, and I am constantly adding new clothes to my wardrobe.

One day I was messing around with my friends, showing them my most recent purchases, when one of them said I should try not wearing the same outfit twice in a semester. And that's how this all started.

I have made it my personal mission to make sure I had a different outfit every single day of the semester this year, and I can now finally say I successfully did it.

I am lucky to have what I like to call "extra closet space." Since my boyfriend has a house off campus, and I had my dorm on campus, I have double storage. None of these outfits were too much. I stuck to a very ba-

sic taste in style to keep things easy to remember what I wore and what I haven't.

I kept track by taking a picture every day and constantly having to look back at them to double-check I hadn't worn it.

No one believed I could do it because typically I would dress decent for the first couple weeks of class and then slowly give up and go to class in pajamas. But their disbelief only fueled me to not wear the same outfit twice.

Unfortunately, this did wonders for my spending addiction. In my mind, I did not have enough clothes to do this, but in my roommate's and boyfriend's opinions, I have too much clothing.

But really, how can you have too much clothing? I like to call it options.

Some of my favorite outfits from this semester are definitely more basic, but they were cute and I felt like I was eating up in them. The first outfit that

I loved was a basic little fit with blue jeans and a plaid jacket. I got the jacket when I was in Sweden, and it became a new favorite in my closet.

Another favorite was more recent, since warm weather clothes on my favorite. It's a simple linen outfit with blue and white striped linen pants and a crocheted top.

Lastly, my basic comfy but still cute outfit with plain linen pants and a crewneck.

None of my outfits were super extravagant, but I am proud to say I have enough clothes to probably style everyone who lives on campus. My favorite part of this entire challenge was forcing myself to constantly get put together for class. I feel like my energy and attitude are affected by what I am wearing, so if I am dressed in sweats, I am more lazy than I am when in a cute outfit. You know, if you look good, you'll feel good.

International:

Students typically take advantage of breaks to visit with their families and spend time at home. The majority of international students don't have this option and expressed their feelings of being homesick.

"I think I'd do anything to hug my mom. Moreso for her sake, she worries a lot," one student said, who has not seen her mom in person since 2022.

Most international students said they have not been to their home countries since coming to the United States.

The risk of losing their ability to pursue a higher education has become a pressing concern. Students explained how essential it is to obtain the correct documents, and to have awareness of their rights.

Despite that, many share concerns over the fact that there have been individuals who were deported during their efforts to legally stay in the country.

"There's a lot of people saying we're at risk even if you do have the correct documents," one said. "All my cards, my documents, everything I carry wherever I go."

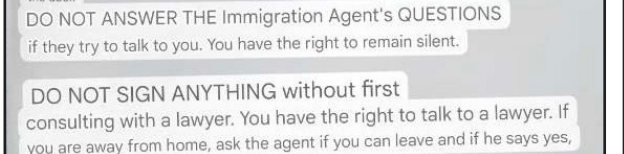
Despite the heaviness of the issue, students expressed their feelings of gratitude towards the community.

The DEI efforts at VTSU have helped many students acquire jobs and internship opportunities. The students at VTSU Castleton have been "very welcoming and easy to talk to," one international student said.

The ability to cross the border is a complex interplay between immigration policies and global events.

It's essential that institutions and policymakers work collaboratively to ensure that international students are treated fairly, so that their vital role in enriching educational communities is preserved.

"I can technically leave, there's just no coming back," one said.



International students carry around cards with guidance on how to handle ICE encounters.

English:

"Losing professors like Tersh and Denny, and soon Flo, had a big impact. They were not just knowledgeable, but deeply passionate and invested in their students and their position as English professors," Gould said. "It sometimes feels like we lost part of the heart of the department, and in my opinion, we did."

Losing these professors also led to a decreased variety in the classes. One course used to be taught by multiple professors, not because there was a faculty shortage, but because students deserved to have multiple perspectives of a subject to have a more well-rounded understanding and learning experience.

Keyes and Boettcher used to alternate teaching World Literature. With Keyes retiring, Boettcher will be teaching it on his own.

"There will be Chris, and he may do an excellent job teaching World Lit, but you're only going to see World Lit one way because you don't get another professor who teaches it in a different way. And I don't think that's right. I really think that diversity of teaching is important." Keyes said.

Another unexpected and some say unwelcomed change brought on by the merger was the number of online courses students are forced to take.

"For many students, taking online courses is not how they learn the best, and they feel like they can't get to know their professors as well through a screen. Building relationships benefits both students and professors. Professors can tailor their teaching to support the needs of individual students, and students can look to professors for mentoring and extra support, both academically and many times personally," Papandrea said.

Moving forward Alexander notes some things that need to be kept in mind to help the English department grow.

"So, one of the things that we have to think about, and planning for the next 10 years, is how do we attract students in ways that they think what we have to offer is something that they would like to get. And right now, we're sort of boxed into the idea that we train teachers and people who want to go to grad school," Alexander said. "We've been—I've been since I was chair and even after that—banging the drum that says, 'hey, listen, you know, some of the biggest business success stories in our culture, were English majors: politicians, business leaders, lawyers, you know, activists, musicians.' Do you know the band, The Police? Sting was an English major," continued Alexander.

Phalen paused when asked if she would've chosen English as her major had she known this would be the course of her education, then said yes.

"I would have chosen English either way. I fell in love with English after learning about Hunter S. Thompson. He really inspired me to pursue writing. Although, and I feel sad in saying this, I may not have chosen Castleton," Phalen said.

"The professors that I've had have been amazing, however, it has been detrimental to see them diminish, as well as the opportunity to expand my education diminish, as a result of professors being pushed out," Phalen said.

Camaraderie found in Student Services

By Henry Robertson
Spartan Contributor

Denise Rhodes has been working at VTSU Castleton for nearly 17 years, including six in the Financial Aid Office.

And when asked what she has gained most from her years there, she was quick with an answer.

"One of the strongest things I have gained is a sense of camaraderie and teamwork," she said "We work very well together because we support and assist each other.

But the camaraderie isn't the only thing she accredited the office's success to.

"One of the other things that makes it very easy to work here is our sense of humor," she said with a smile.

Jennifer Woodell, who works in Student Accounts in the Financial Aid Office, also touched on the office's light-hearted vibe and cheery sense of humor. The office has always been tight knit, claims Woodell.

"We want the office to be positive," said Woodell. "This allows for the financial services to be welcoming for students."

Joann Austin also works in the Financial Aid Office, and said she believes the work environment makes it easier for her to come in to work every day.

"We understand each other. We have the same chemistry," Austin said.

When asked if the office's strong sense of camaraderie eased the tension during the merger, Woodell responded "yes without question."

Rhodes and Austin said they agree.

The consolidation of Johnson, Lyndon, Williston, Randolph and Castleton into Vermont State University has resulted in many changes on every campus. One prominent change is the shift of the Financial Aid Office's responsibilities.

"We get calls regarding all VTSU campuses," said Austin, "and our proximity to each other makes the workplace more than ideal."

Austin's cubicle can be found between Rhode's and Woodell's.

"There have been changes since the consolidation," Rhodes said. "This change has caused a shift in our responsibilities that I had to get used to, but that can also be exciting."

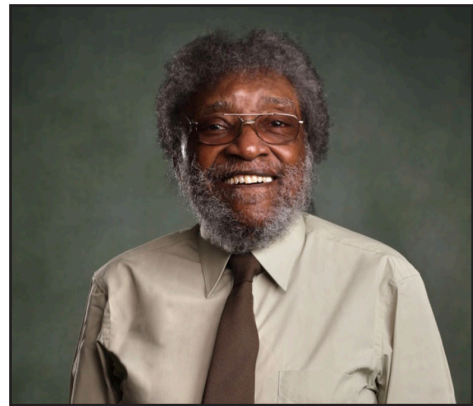
The office's ability to work at a time of change and shift in responsibilities directly stems from their tight relationships. And while change can bring new challenges and be scary, it can be good, Rhodes suggests.

When leaving the office, this sense of friendship and humor became evident.

"Make sure you tell them to check their bill," Austin exclaimed, followed by contagious laughter from Rhodes and Woodell.

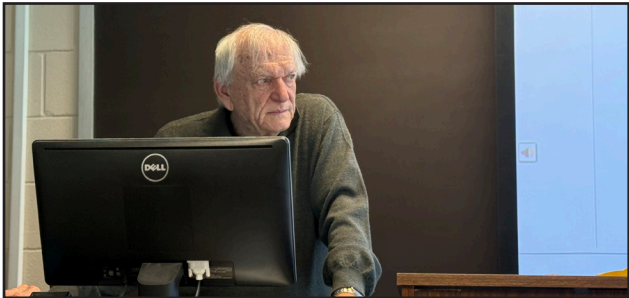
Thanks for everything!

Longtime professors retire from Sociology and English departments



Two long-time Vermont State University Castleton professors are retiring at the end of the semester after a combined 76 years of service at the university.

Sociology professor Luther Brown retires after 41 years and English professor Flo Keyes is retiring after 35 years. Best of luck to both influential professors from The Spartan.



Burnham:

Now, retirement offers a new kind of adventure.

"I want to spend my life in a creative heat," he said. "I have four book projects that I'm interested in: A children's book... a memoir... a novel... a collection of Shakespearean sonnets."

He's also planning to collaborate on a new play.

"I want to paint pictures and I want to write and just live in a white heat," he said.

His wish list also includes a return to music.

"I used to play trumpet, and I want to get a flugelhorn and play mystic," he said.

And yes, maybe even a return to Sweden, a country close to his heart.

"I just hope he gets to go back to Sweden where he really wants to go and enjoy the rest of his retirement among beautiful women like he loves," Thomas said with a laugh.

Colleague Keys had one more wish for him too.

"I think one of the things that he would really, really like is to have the New York audience really receive one of his plays... and embrace it and make it a play that people all want to see. So, I'll wish him that," she said.

Holmes himself is characteristically reflective about the transition.

"You never want to stay too long at the dance. You don't want to be the last one out the door," he said. "It's me time now... Just to get up in the morning and ask, 'What project do I want to work on?'"

To some, this may feel like the end of an era, but not to Holmes.

"To do things, rather than feeling like it's the end of the road, feel like it's a bend in the road," he said.

For Years Now

You have been asking, "When do you retire?" The answer has always been: "You will know."

This always seemed mysterious, Like say, writing with invisible ink.

Recently, when asked to sign up for next fall, You found yourself unable to commit. You struggled for days, restless, overwhelmed. Could you afford to? Could you afford not to?

You once went four years without a real job, Doing this or that to stay afloat. You said you would never do that again, But this time you have Social Security and a 401k.

Plus, you are writing this in a rented room. So, it's not like you have big aspirations: Roof, bed, desk, chair, window, heat, food, water. To be around people, not lonely.

"About time," said a friend. "Time will go fast now." "It was before," you said. "Just you wait," he replied. So, now you're feeling you waited too long. That problems other than money will arise

Sooner rather than later. But hey, That's the name of the game, right? Old age waits for all of us to enjoy Or endure. It all depends on us.

So, here's to living every day As if it's your last. Because you never Know when Mara, that fearsome demon, Will come a knock-knock-knocking on your door.

Burnham Holmes
Poultney/NYC

Latest political discussion series talk focuses on trade

By Jackson Edwards
Castleton Spartan

The political conversation continued in Castleton this past Friday at noon with Castleton Indivisible. Business Professor Jody Condon and senior business major Aksel Stroem-Hansen, and star for the Castleton ski team, delivered a lecture that was less classroom discussion and more economic wake-up call.

The talk, titled Tariffs, Business Relations, and Impacts on the Stock Market, pulled no punches. Framed around the resurgence of tariffs under President Donald Trump, Condon and Stroem-Hansen broke down what those policies mean for average Americans and what they reveal about the state of the country's economic identity. Spoiler: it's not great.

One of the most striking moments came early, when Condon walked the room through a timeline tracking U.S. economic policy from Trump's 2018 steel and aluminum tariffs through the 2020 COVID crash, and into the volatile recovery that followed. Market trips, retaliatory tariffs from trading partners, price hikes, and supply chain shocks were laid out in sequence - a play-by-play of how political decisions turned into real-world consequences.

At the heart of the lecture was a big, uncomfortable question: is the United States still the stable, reliable market it's long been seen as? According to Condon and Stroem-Hansen, the answer is increasingly no. The U.S. brand has historically been backed by steady leadership, open markets, and the promise of opportunity, and on a global scale is losing credibility.

The presenters emphasized what they called a "triple threat" to U.S. economic confidence: stock market instability, bond market volatility, and a weakening dollar. All three, they argued, were downstream effects of erratic policy decisions, trade conflict, and a growing sense among investors that the U.S. is no longer the sure thing it once was.

A local case study made it personal. Barr Hill Gin, a Vermont distillery, lost a major Canadian export opportunity due to tariff backlash. "There are no winners in a trade war," Stroem-Hansen read from the company's public statement - a stark reminder that these economic shifts aren't just abstract trends. They hit home.

During the Q&A, one audience member asked about the Federal Reserve: specifically, how the recent volatility might affect interest rates, and whether Trump could influence Fed Chair Jerome Powell's decisions. Condon was clear: the Federal Reserve operates

independently. Trump doesn't have the power to fire Jerome Powell, and Powell has been clear in stating that they operate independently. "That's by design." Interest rates, she explained, respond to inflation, employment, and economic stability, not political preference.

Policies like tariffs are often branded as populist "America First" measures supposedly meant to help the middle class. But Condon and Stroem-Hansen made it clear: the real costs fall on working people, not CEOs. Small businesses, hourly workers, and students trying to enter the job market are the ones least equipped to ride out economic turbulence.

Philosophy Professor Brendan Lalor often reminds his students that democracy depends not just on participation, but on an informed and curious public. That idea has echoed through this "teaching the Present Moment" lecture series, a call to think critically about who benefits from our economic policies and who bears the cost.

By the end, one message stood out: economic strength isn't just about GDP or Wall Street rebounds. It's about trust. And right now, the U.S. is running low on it, both from global investors and from its own people.

Smoke-filled Huden



ETHAN PROSPERE
A fire in an wok caused Huden Dining Hall to fill up with smoke.

Men's lax season comes to a tough close

By Hannah Tatro
Castleton Spartan

The Castleton men's lacrosse team's season has come to an end.

The Spartans wrapped up their 2025 season on Friday, April 25, in a tight contest against fellow Little East Conference member Eastern Connecticut State University, which ended in an 11-8 loss for the Spartans on home turf.

Prior to the game, Castleton celebrated four graduating seniors in front of a packed home crowd: Liam Lovering, Ethan Esposito, Hunter Sarro, and Zac Smith.

Despite a challenging season and a 3-12 overall record, the Spartans showed resilience and growth throughout their 15 games.

Their first win came in game six of the season, on the road at Russell Sage College in a non-conference game. A group effort led by junior, Cater Frankenhoff's five-goal game, led to a dominant 17-7 victory to get the Spartans in the win column for the first time.

But, the group struggled a bit with consistency and their

ability to string wins together.

Following their first win, there were back-to-back losses against Nichols College and Western Connecticut State University at home, before an exciting 17-15 win over Salem State University for the team's first victory in conference play.

The Spartans remained on the road, traveling to Plymouth State University and looking for consecutive wins for the first time this year.

Despite getting out to a quick start, they would go on to lose the game by a score of 10-3 at the hands of the Panthers.

But they bounced right back, with a dominant 12-4 victory at home in an exciting contest against LEC rivals from the University of Southern Maine. The Frankenhoff brothers led the way, combining for five of the Spartans' 12 goals to seal the win for the Spartans at Dave Wolk Stadium in front of the home crowd.

The key conference win was followed by four straight losses. A close battle with Keene State saw the Spartans lose 11-5 on the road, a game that wouldn't have been that close without the 27-save per-



From left to right, Liam Lovering, Zac Smith, Ethan Esposito, and Hunter Sarro pose with their families and supporters on Senior Night against Eastern Connecticut State.

formance from the goaltender, Zac Smith. Loses against Massachusetts Maritime Academy and UMass Boston followed, and then the senior day loss

to Eastern Connecticut State saw the 2025 season come to a close.

Although their record wasn't where they would have

liked it to be, the program looks to have an exciting future, with the potential to return 17 players to the roster for the 2026 season.

The Spartans finished seventh in the LEC and concluded their season with an overall record of 3-12, having gone 2-6 in conference play.

CASTLETONSPORTS

Spartans find success on the track and field

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

The Vermont State University Castleton men's and women's track and field teams turned in a strong showing at the New England Division III Outdoor Track & Field Championships over the weekend, with the Spartan women placing 26th overall and scoring 10 points.

On the women's side, the Spartans were led by sophomore Kalynn Stevenson, who delivered a stellar performance in the discus, launching a program-record throw of 43.91 meters to finish second overall.

The toss earned eight team points and currently ranks her 30th nationally in NCAA Division III. Stevenson also picked up two points in the shot put with a seventh-place throw of 12.39 meters, securing her place as Castleton's first-ever two-time All-New England performer and first medalist at the New England Championships.

Isabell Lanfear and Karli Martin also qualified for multiple events. Lanfear placed 13th in the javelin (34.11m) and 18th in the shot put (11.42m), while Martin took 21st in the hammer throw (39.87m).

On the track, Bethany Davis clocked 41:58.71 in the 10,000-meter run, placing 24th overall in the event.

"The returners also came back in great shape and performed at a high level. Distance athletes found success breaking program records and qualifying for the Conference Championship as well as the New England Championship," said head coach, Ian Sawtelle. "Bethany Davis is poised to have a bigger year if that is possible after breaking multiple program records, qualifying for the Conference Cham-



On the top, Sidiki Sylla after one of his throws during the event. On the bottom, Kalynn Stevenson on her way to throw the program record in discus.

pionship indoor and outdoor as well as her first New England Championship in outdoor."

The Spartan men were equally competitive, with veteran Jon Hendley running 34:08.40 in the 10,000-meter to place 21st, closing out a strong collegiate career.

Freshman Carter Mackey cleared 1.85 meters in the high jump to finish 12th, capping off a season in which he qualified for both the Conference and New England Championships. First-year thrower Eddie Sayers, had a breakout performance, tossing 39.68 meters in the discus to take 18th. Sayers, who also qualified for the

New England meet in discus and two conference events, is part of a promising group of freshmen. Sidiki Sylla rounded out the Spartan results with a 12.52-meter effort in the shot put.

Despite the ongoing challenge of training without dedicated track facilities, the Spar-

tans' coaching staff leaned into creative solutions. Through strategic planning and outside-the-box training methods, they maximized available resources—and it showed. Castleton qualified more athletes for the New England Championships this season than ever before.

"I am very happy with this

season, and I see nothing but success going forward. We had the most ever athletes in program history to qualify for the New England Championship this outdoor season and had our first two (2) time All New England athlete as well as our first medalist at the New England Championship," Sawtelle said. "Track and field is an incredibly demanding sport, especially at the college level where it's essentially two full seasons in a single academic year. This group rose to the occasion."

Freshmen made a notable impact across the board. Megan Carson, Brody Hopkins, and Sean Roth added much-needed depth to the sprints group and show signs to being cornerstones of the Spartan Track and Field team moving forward.

Sienna Newth and Eddie Sayers stood out in the throws, each qualifying for multiple events at the conference level and showing potential to contend at the regional level in the coming years.

Meanwhile, the returners came back stronger than ever. Along with Stevenson and Davis, athletes like Karli Martin, Isabell Lanfear, Rachel Doty-Snay, Connor Fournier, McKenna Castor, and Carter Mackey all played key roles in Castleton's success, with many qualifying for both indoor and outdoor conference and regional meets.

The season isn't over yet. Stevenson is currently ranked 30th nationally in the discus and will compete on May 10 at Williams College in a final bid to improve her mark and earn a spot at the NCAA DIII National Championships.

CASTLETONSPORTS

Women's lacrosse season closes out after big steps



CASTLETONSPORTS

The womens lacrosse team saw a year of ups and downs under second-year head coach Bella Ferraro. Ferraro led the Spartans almost to the cusp of playoffs however, fell one game short of getting into the dance. Despite not making playoffs, the team had their highest win total since 2019, ending with a 5-13 record. The Spartans came out with five wins this year and a handful of close games that if things went a little different the Spartans could have came out on top. The team only will be losing three seniors to graduation, Kailyn August (left), Katie Stager (center), and Brianna Paul (right).

Softball season ends in unfortunatate fashion



CASTLETEONSPORTS

The Spartans found success this season under the guidance of new head coach, Eric Kraut, finishing with a winning record at 17-15. On the flip side of that however, is the Spartans did not find themselves in a playoff spot in the LEC due to only finding themselves with a 6-10 record in LEC play. The team looks to build off the season for next year as they will only be losing three seniors.

Baseball battled until the last out

By Isiah Hughes
Castleton Spartan

With the playoffs within reach, the VTSU Castleton Spartans baseball team entered Saturday's crucial doubleheader against Rhode Island College knowing exactly what was at stake.

After a resilient 11-5 mid-week victory over Vermont State Lyndon gave the Spartans hope and momentum, the final games of the regular season promised drama, pressure, and an opportunity to extend the year.

Instead, Castleton's season came to a bitter end, as two tough losses to Rhode Island by scores of 10-2 and 14-5 dashed their playoff hopes and brought a rollercoaster season to a heartbreaking close.

Game one of the double-headers started with promise. Mason Meinke's RBI single in the first gave Castleton a 1-0 lead, and after Rhode Island tied it with a solo home run in the third, the Spartans responded quickly with a Jack Boyle triple that brought home Tyler Dubreuil.

Leading 2-1, the Spartans looked poised to compete, but the momentum shifted sharply. Rhode Island erupted for six runs in the top of the fifth inning, turning the game on its head. Castleton's bats went cold as the Anchormen added three more runs in the final innings to close out a 10-2 win.

Boyle and Turner Clews paced the offense with two hits each, but the Spartans were unable to string together a late-inning rally.

Game two opened with urgency, as the Anchormen jumped out to a 4-0 lead in the first inning. Castleton refused to go down quietly though.

A double by Jackson Car-doza got the Spartans on the board, and a series of disciplined at-bats including a bases-loaded walk to Tommie Shaw and a clutch two-RBI single from freshman Robbie Briggs put Castleton ahead 5-4.

The early surge was short-lived. Rhode Island responded immediately with seven runs across the next two innings to take control.

The Spartans struggled to regain offensive rhythm, and the Anchormen padded their lead with runs in the fifth and eighth innings. With Castleton trailing 14-5 and storms approaching, the game was called before the start of the ninth, sealing the Spartans' season-ending loss.

Despite flashes of potential throughout the year including a strong seven-game win streak in early April Castleton finishes the 2025 season with a 13-25 overall record, going 4-12 in Little East Conference play.

The season was marked by breakout performances from young talent and strong leadership from veterans like Jack Boyle and Tyler Dubreuil. Standout pitching efforts, combined with a handful of offensive explosions, proved that the team could compete with anyone on their best day.

Though the year ends in disappointment, the Spartans walk away with valuable experience and a foundation to build on for 2026. With rising stars already making an impact and a hungry core likely to return, Castleton will look to turn this season's heartbreak into next year's redemption.



CASTLETONSPORTS

On the top, the Spartans dugout is dialed in prior to their match up against University of Southern Maine. On the bottom, Jack Boyle running to the dugout to celebrate his home run with the team.

I'm finally on my way out of here

By Stone Stelzl
Castleton Spartan

What a way to end it with the *Spartan*. Five years later and countless stories written and edited. It feels like I got here before the internet was a thing.

It has been a long journey for me as a writer, athlete and person. This place has shaped me into a much different person than I was when I came in. When I first came into this school, it was the year of COVID, and everything was online. That was torture and I felt like I didn't really get to truly do anything at this place.

Fast forward to my first in-person class I ever had with Dave Blow and it changed my whole perspective of how I saw myself as a writer and what my experience was going to be like here. It was not easy at first for me to join *The Spartan*.

I had never made a meeting because of practice, which was so tough, but I knew I needed to get involved with the sports. Dave kept pushing me to get more involved, and thank God he did because he helped me find my writing voice and style over these years.

Over my time here, I owe a lot to Dave because he's prepared me for my future with sports journalism and every-

thing I want to do. Ironically though, the class I had with Dave that I think was the most beneficial for me had nothing to do with sports. It was Feature Writing and mandated weekly blog posts. I used to just sit down and watch the number one show on Netflix that week and write about it. That assignment was so fun and shaped how I wrote the rest of my time here.

So, thank you for everything Dave. You helped me in many ways throughout my time here and I couldn't be happier to have worked with a mentor like you. I know with your guidance over the years I'm ready to actually get a job in our field but be successful with it.

Now, onto *the Spartan* and what it has done for me over the years. *The Spartan* was a lot of fun for me. Four years and countless issues of the newspaper later, I am leaving my final mark on it. The Spartan has been a fun experience to have throughout college.

Whether it was me trying to convince Jackson Edwards and Lauren Fotter to join or our yearly trips to New York City. The Spartan never failed me. It also introduced me to a lot of great people over the years that, if I'm being honest, I'm not certain that I would have

met if I was not in the club.

Back to the New York City trip for a second, but it has to be a top experience that you can get at this school through a club. The conference is great with so much useful information for a person in the journalism world and the trip itself, you can really take advantage of getting to explore the busiest city there is. The trip is what you make of it, and I think every year it only gets better.

Minus the day Jackson and I were on full bed rest because we were both sick...

Over the years, the Spartan has been a staple for me, and it will be something I cherished during my time at Castleton. It feels like 20 years I've been here. All the sports crew through the years I thank you and thank you Maddie and Pearl for being great editors.

I could keep going all day, I mean I have been here forever, but the Spartan was the other side of my Castleton experience next to my experience as an athlete here.

Both were much different than each other but, both taught me more than I could ever ask for moving forward.



JOE VYVIAL

Professor Dave Blow, Stone Stelzl and Lauren Fotter chat during a break from sessions at the College Media Association conference in New York City.